



# THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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GUY BOLTON  
AND  
GEORGE MIDDLETON





Class PS3503

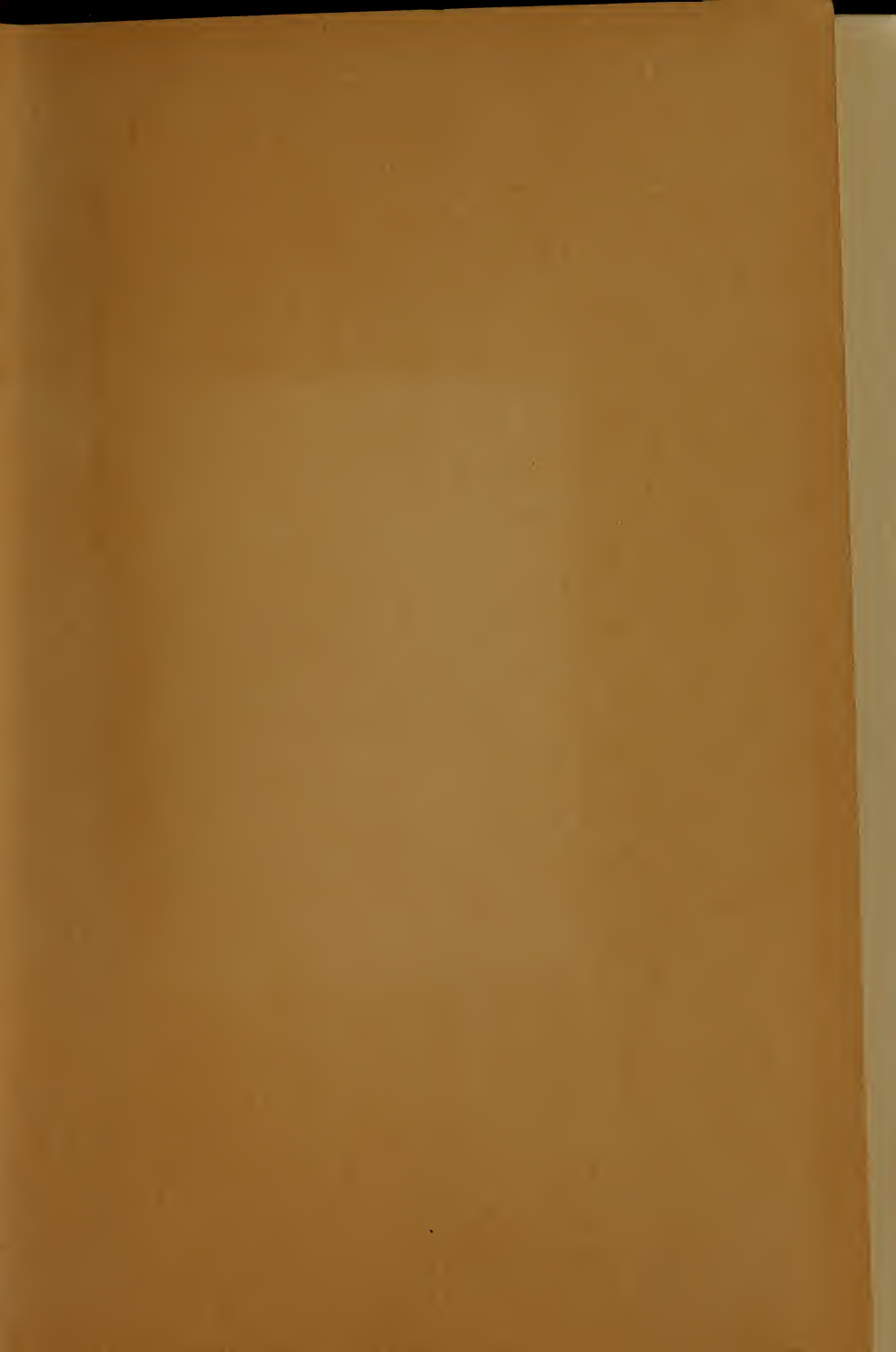
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**PUBLISHERS** **NEW YORK**





ANTON: "Forgive them for they know not what they do."

*Act 2.*

# THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

A MODERN DRAMA

By  
GUY BOLTON  
AND  
GEORGE MIDDLETON



NEW YORK  
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY  
1920

PS3503  
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1920

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# THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

*As Produced at Lyric and Manhattan Theatres,  
New York City.*

PROGRAM

F. RAY COMSTOCK and MORRIS GEST

Present

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

A Modern Drama in Three Acts

By

GUY BOLTON and GEORGE MIDDLETON

## CHARACTERS

(Named in the order of their appearance)

|                                                                                                   |                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| MARY RENDEL, <i>mother of Anton,</i>                                                              | Miss Percy Haswell      |
| NATHAN, <i>a Jew,</i>                                                                             | Mr. Fuller Mellish      |
| RUTH LEDOUX,                                                                                      | Miss Jane Cooper        |
| "THE THREE WISE MEN":                                                                             |                         |
| BERT ADAMS, <i>an American newspaper man,</i>                                                     | Mr. Wright Kramer       |
| JAN VAN VEEN, <i>of the Dutch Academy,</i>                                                        | Mr. Fred Vogeding       |
| ARTHUR BROOKE, <i>an English Poet,</i>                                                            | Mr. Leslie Palmer       |
| ANTON RENDEL, <i>a carpenter and wood-carver,</i>                                                 | Mr. Pedro de Cordoba    |
| SIMON BROCK, <i>his friend, engaged to Ruth,</i>                                                  | Mr. Ralph Kellard       |
| JONAS KURZ,                                                                                       | Mr. B. Wallis Clark     |
| AGNES,                                                                                            | Miss Helen Chandler     |
| TIMOTHY,                                                                                          | Master Charles Crumpton |
| PASTOR SAUNDERS,                                                                                  | Mr. Arnold Lucy         |
| MARTIN GAST,                                                                                      | Mr. Ernest A. Elton     |
| JAMES MAYRE,                                                                                      | Mr. Burke Clarke        |
| PAUL MAYRE,                                                                                       | Mr. Gerald Rogers       |
| RAYMOND HOTT                                                                                      | Mr. Arthur Fitzgerald   |
| MARGOT HASER,                                                                                     | Miss Phillis Povah      |
| MARNA LYND,                                                                                       | Miss Clara Joel         |
| <i>Other villagers, various characters in the Passion Play,<br/>Children, Elders, Choir, etc.</i> |                         |

[Production staged by Robert Milton.]

## SCENES

ACT I. *The Home of* ANTON RENDEL.

ACT II. *Open Air Stage of the Passion Play Theatre. Four Weeks Later.*

ACT III. *Same as Act One. A few days later.*

TIME. The Present.

THE FIRST ACT  
AT THE HOME OF ANTON RENDEL



# THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

## THE FIRST ACT

*THE Living Room of ANTON RENDEL'S cottage is a quaint, sunny, cheerful place; quaint by dint of the low-arched doorways, the huge porcelain stove and the tiny staircase that twists itself into one corner as if determined to take up as little room as possible; sunny because of a wide casemented window at the side and a doorway at the back, the glazed upper half of which is left open to admit the soft spring air; and cheerful because it is obviously the scene of much pleasant activity: here is ANTON'S carving-bench, his mother's ironing-stand, a dining table and a built-in dresser containing crockery.*

*Near the dining table is a door that opens into the kitchen and back and forth through this round arched opening bobs ANTON'S mother as quickly as a shuttle and like a shuttle fashioning in her movements a homely, simple fabric of every day life. She is in the living room now standing at her ironing board pressing (with an old-fashioned charcoal iron) a wedding veil of which more anon. She is all alone except for a great company of saints and angels that bear testimony to her son's talent and industry as a*

wood-carver. *The little clock on the mantel strikes four.*

*She pauses a moment in her work and looks off through the window and gazes across an intervening valley to the tree sloped mountains piled up against the blue. She smiles as if glad to be alive—and indeed why shouldn't she? She has a pleasant home, a son who warmly appreciates and returns her devotion, and plenty of kindly neighbors. Besides, it is the year of the Passion Play and that certainly puts a thrill of excitement into life and causes every heart on the mountainside to swell with pride at the realization that the eyes of the whole world are turned toward their sacred village. We can let those who are watching her into the secret of what she is thinking. She is hoping (yes and praying, too) that her ANTON may be chosen to enact the rôle of the Beloved Disciple—a rare honor indeed and one that is to be bestowed to-day by the committee of elders who are met in the village hall to make their choice of this year's Passion Players.*

MARY RENDEL sighs and returns to her work and at the same time old NATHAN, the Jew, enters, bearing a bundle of pear-wood sticks all ready for carving.

NATHAN is the only Jew in the village and perhaps because of this he bears the burden of Judaism the more consciously and proudly. His race is well represented in this old man: loyal, just, a shrewd bargainer and a keen observer of men. His wit is at times playful, at times sardonic as the occasion prompts.

MOTHER

Is that Nathan?

NATHAN

Yes. I had trouble to get good pear-wood. It seems to me every home in the village contains a wood-carver this year.

MOTHER

Is there any news?

NATHAN

What news do you want?

MOTHER

Anton said that the Elders of the village were voting to-day for those who are to have places in the Passion Play.

NATHAN

Yes, so they are. There are four newcomers to be honored. All the others are the same as they were ten years ago.

MOTHER

Old Rickert's daughter told me just now that her father was getting better, so perhaps they won't have to choose a new Judas Iscariot.

NATHAN

Good. He is the best actor of them all.

MOTHER

Indeed he is. That American who boarded with us during the last Passion Play, said it was a pity that the sacred story called for the hanging of Judas. There were several of the other players deserved it so much more. (NATHAN *laughs.*) But, tell me, Nathan, is there no rumor in the village as to who will be chosen for St. John—or the Christ?

NATHAN

None that has come to my ears. But then these good Christians are not likely to discuss such matters with a Jew.

MOTHER

Don't judge their bigotry too harshly, Nathan; those old prejudices die slowly. And it speaks well for both you and your race that you have been able at least to win the respect of the whole village.

*(Blows in iron trying to start it burning.)*

NATHAN

Here, here, here, let me give it a blow.

*(Takes the iron, gives it a couple of hearty blows till the sparks fly out.)*

There.

MOTHER

*(Resuming her ironing)*

Thank you, Nathan.

NATHAN

Time was when you and your son were the only

ones in this village who would speak with me. I came here a refugee seeking shelter and these folk all tried to drive me out with their silence and their scornful looks.

MOTHER

Anton has always been like that. Even as a boy, he would cry out against all that was mean or narrow-minded.

NATHAN

*(Simply)*

He is a good man even before he is a good Christian.

MOTHER

I thank the Lord every day for having given me such a son, *(Sighing)* only I wish he might have made him a little better business man.

NATHAN

He did the next best thing: *(Reaches over and pats her arm.)* He sent him a Jew for a helper.

MOTHER

*(As they both laugh)*

I'm glad of that.

*(RUTH comes in carrying an armful of wild flowers, which she has picked, and her bridal wreath, which she has just made.)*

RUTH LE DOUX is a sweet-faced girl radiantly happy, speaking now and then with a little catch in her throat that hints of tears—

8 THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

*for to-day is her wedding day; yet there is strength beneath her gentle charm—strength little expected till it is to be tested.)*

RUTH

Hello, Nathan!

NATHAN

Ruth!

MOTHER

And where is your handsome, young bridegroom?

RUTH

Oh, Simon is off mustering up his courage for the wedding, I expect.

MOTHER

It's a funny thing, that no matter how keen for it he may be, a man always seems to get nervous when he hears the church bells.

NATHAN

*(Playfully)*

Tolling the hour of his doom.

RUTH

What's that?

NATHAN

And why not? It's proper enough to laugh when a man is looking over the flock, but when he puts down

his money and says "this is the sheep I'll take"—that's a serious thing, isn't it?

RUTH

And what do you mean by "looking over the flock"? Has Simon made love to all the girls here?

NATHAN

Oh, no, not *all*. I'll swear he never bothered with the cross-eyed ones.

MOTHER

Stop teasing her, Nathan.

*(Goes into kitchen with ironing board.)*

RUTH

*(Putting flower in his button hole)*

That's all right, Aunt Mary, I shan't pay any attention to him.

NATHAN

Look at the way the sun is shining on your marriage-day!

RUTH

Yes. When I was out gathering flowers for my bridal wreath everywhere there was sunshine and birds singing and the little water-fall below the Kofel made a sound like wedding-bells.

*(A knock is heard. TWO MEN appear at the doorway; they are ADAMS and VAN VEEN.)*

RUTH

Come in.

(BERT ADAMS is a cheerful, happy go lucky fellow; a great hustler after news which is perhaps the reason he has the commission to cover this year's Passion Play for the New York papers. His companion, JAN VAN VEEN is, by way of contrast, a savant interested in the play from an historical standpoint—not as a believer. But being good humored and tolerant he is quite contented to keep his atheism in the background.)

ADAMS

Excuse us. But is this the home of Anton Rendel, the wood-carver?

RUTH

Yes, it is. Won't you come in?

ADAMS

Thank you. Come in, Professor.

VAN VEEN

(*Entering*)

How do you do?

RUTH and NATHAN

How do you do?

ADAMS

My friend, Professor Van Veen here, bought a carving of Rendel's last summer.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD 11

NATHAN

Of course, I remember. Down at the Kroonwald Inn. It was *I* that sold it to him.

VAN VEEN

And I found after I examined it that there was a price scratched on the bottom.

NATHAN

Yes.

VAN VEEN

And that price was just one-half what you charged me for it.

NATHAN

Oh! Perhaps I am mistaken. I don't think I could have been the one that sold it to you, after all.

VAN VEEN

Hmm!

BROOKE

*(Appearing in the doorway carrying rain coat on his arm)*

How do you do?

RUTH

Won't you come in?

BROOKE

Thanks.

(ARTHUR BROOKE is a poet and the charm of an elfin fancy runs through his soft-voiced remarks. To him the Passion Play is very quaint and beautiful, but of course, not so beautiful as the legends of Greek mythology with which his poet's nature is more akin.)

NATHAN

Rather early for visitors to be coming to the village.

ADAMS

Yes; we're three wise guys. (BROOKE and VAN VEEN exchange disapproving looks.) We came up to choose our quarters for the Passion Play season before the mob get here.

NATHAN

Looking for rooms?

ADAMS

Yes.

NATHAN

Well, perhaps we can accommodate you.

BROOKE

(*Who has been looking about*)

What a charming interior. It is like one of those paintings of Teniers.

VAN VEEN

Charming—charming. Will someone tell Rendel that we'd be glad to look over his carvings?

RUTH

I'll go and get him.

NATHAN

Wait, wait. Don't bother Anton. He's a very busy man. *I'll show them to you.*

*(He selects several small statues from the top shelf as the visitors continue looking about the room.)*

ADAMS

But I'd like to interview Rendel if you don't mind. As long as you all say he's the best wood-carver in Switzerland, he ought to be worth a column in my weekly letter to the *Herald*.

RUTH

*(Seeing NATHAN start for the kitchen)*  
Nathan, where are you going with those carvings?

NATHAN

I'm going to mark the prices *distinctly*. They are not very plain and there must be no mistake this time.  
*(He goes into the kitchen.)*

RUTH

Won't you sit down?

VAN VEEN

Thank you.

14      THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

MOTHER

*(Entering from kitchen)*

Greetings, gentlemen.

BROOKE

Greetings to you.

ADAMS

Good afternoon.

RUTH

They've come to see Anton.

MOTHER

I am always proud to have strangers admire my son's work.

VAN VEEN

You are Anton Rendel's mother?

MOTHER

Yes, sir.

BROOKE

*(To his friends)*

Isn't she a Rembrandt?

MOTHER

No, sir: I am a Swiss.

*(The men smile: RUTH whispers something in her ear, correcting her mistake and she also laughs.)*

ADAMS

(To VAN VEEN, *indicating* RUTH)

While you're collecting paintings, don't overlook this one.

MOTHER

Would the gentlemen like a little May wine?

BROOKE

Thank you. Indeed we would.

ADAMS

I supposed a burg that was so darned strong for all this religious dope would be dry.

MOTHER

Excuse us, gentlemen. Come, Ruth dear.

(*She goes into the kitchen and after a moment's hesitation RUTH runs out after her.*)

BROOKE

Now you've shocked that sweet little mountain flower.

ADAMS

You mean what I said about their religion?

VAN VEEN

It's hard to remember there are people who still believe in God.

BROOKE

God is as beautiful to these folk as Jupiter and Venus and all the Greek mythology is to me.

ADAMS

We're a fine trio to come to the Passion Play. A poet-pagan, an atheist——

BROOKE

And you an American newspaper man: a creature with neither a soul nor a conscience.

VAN VEEN

The Three Wise Men journeying from afar.

BROOKE

Yes; three Twentieth Century Wise Men come to see this Twentieth Century Christ.

ADAMS

By the way, who plays Christ this year?

BROOKE

The Christus is as yet unchosen. I believe they are voting to-day.

ADAMS

I must get an interview with him as soon as it's settled.

BROOKE

Don't be so flippant, Adams.

ADAMS

What's the matter with you?

BROOKE

I don't know. There's something about all this that impresses me. Christianity is a beautiful thing, even though it be a beautiful *dead* thing. And after all, beauty is the most sacred thing in the world and the *faith* of these people is beautiful. I feel somehow as if I were standing on sacred ground.

*(ANTON is heard at the top of the little flight of stairs. As the steps attract the attention of the three men they look inquiringly in their direction and follow the sound with their looks, as he comes down the stairs. He pauses on the landing and greets them before descending. He carries in his hand a small block of wood, roughed out for carving.)*

*If NATHAN may stand for the best in Judaism, ANTON may stand for the best in Christianity. His identification with the Christ spirit is not based on mere physical resemblance to the picture of the Saviour, striking though this likeness is; it finds its origin in his strong simple personality and above all in his magnanimity and kindness.)*

ANTON

Welcome, friends.

*(There is a momentary pause. The three men*

*are facing him visibly impressed by his presence.)*

BROOKE

Who are you?

ANTON

I am Anton, the carpenter.

BROOKE

Carpenter?

ANTON

And wood-carver; though the first is the trade I was brought up to.

*(Coming down the stairs.)*

ADAMS

Tell me. What part do you play in the Passion Play?

ANTON

The last time it was given I was one of the disciples of John the Baptist.

ADAMS

Why, that's no more than a super! They ought to give you something better this time.

ANTON

It is honor enough to be thought worthy to play in the Passion Play at all; just as it is pleasant to be

alive on a fine day—even if you are only a poor carpenter.

(*Motions to BROOKE to be seated.*)

BROOKE

Thank you.

VAN VEEN

You people take this play of yours very seriously.

ANTON

And why not?

VAN VEEN

Well, after all, what purpose does it serve?

BROOKE

Purpose? It's beautiful. Isn't that purpose enough, you miserable materialist?

ANTON

Yes, it is beautiful. (*To VAN VEEN*) But more than that it holds up for our example, the best-lived life that any man has ever spent on this old earth of ours.

VAN VEEN

For *our* example? Christ lived nearly two thousand years ago.

ADAMS

The world has progressed in two thousand years.

ANTON

It will be many generations before the world will see eye to eye with Christ. Only step by step and slowly can we reach the heights.

VAN VEEN

But the conditions under which we live are so different. What good is it for *me* to look at the life of Christ?

ANTON

Isn't it possible to live like Christ even in the Twentieth Century?

ADAMS

You just come over to New York and try it.

BROOKE

Yes, the spirit that crucified Christ still lives, Anton Rendel.

ANTON

All the more reason that the spirit of Christ should live, too. Do you think, my friends, the sacred drama which we give in this village is an idle tale of far-away times and strange conditions? Do you not feel that we may, each of us, at any moment, face the same problems as that strong, noble, kindly Man? Have you never felt the ache of His loneliness? The cruel injustice of misunderstanding? Has Judas never betrayed you? Has your trusted friend Simon never deserted you, in your hour of need? Have you never

had to wound your mother's heart by sacrificing her hopes for your future, to your sense of what is right?

BROOKE

Have you met all these things?

ANTON

Yes, in my small way I have met them—just as you have. And who shall say what hour we may meet them in a larger way?

BROOKE

(*Musingly*)

The little heartaches and disappointments give place to the greater test of tragedy.

ANTON

When that time comes for any one of us, the picture of the Man of Nazareth moving amidst clamoring mobs with His head erect and a light on His face will cheer our darkest hour and give us courage. (*Going up to shelves*) But you came to see my carvings, not to listen to me talk.

BROOKE

No, no; we like to hear you talk, don't we, Professor?

VAN VEEN

I hope you're going to get through your life without this severer test of which you speak.

ADAMS

But you live among friends; you're not likely to taste any persecution here.

ANTON

This place has quite a high altitude but it is not Heaven. My old friend, Nathan the Jew, who lives here with us would tell you that.

(*He gives a colored carving to BROOKE.*)

BROOKE

How exquisite!

VAN VEEN

It is a masterpiece!—How beautifully colored!

ADAMS

Well, I don't know much about this sort of thing myself; but I don't believe the New York Academy of Design would sniff at that.

VAN VEEN

And what is the subject?

ANTON

The Magdalen at the foot of the Cross.

BROOKE

It is wonderful! See how this little group of women drawn to one side seem to proclaim their aloofness, even in that black hour, to the woman of sin. And

what eloquence of grief there is in that crumpled heap at the foot of the Cross! That Cross on which hangs the Man who was not afraid to sully His goodness by raising up a harlot!

VAN VEEN

Look out, Brooke. If you stay here, you're going to end up a Christian.

BROOKE

If it could inspire me to create such beauty as this, I wish I might.

*(RUTH enters from kitchen, carrying a small tray upon which is a jug of wine, four glasses and napkins.)*

ADAMS

*(Trying to help RUTH)*

Let me.

RUTH

Thank you.

BROOKE

Your little sister here should make a good model for some of those lovely Madonnas of yours.

ANTON

Ruth is not my sister. I wish she were. She is betrothed to my dearest friend, Simon Brock.

ADAMS

(To RUTH)

Congratulations.

RUTH

(Blushing)

Thank you.

BROOKE

Your dearest friend's name is Simon, too?

VAN VEEN

What do you mean?

BROOKE

I was thinking of Simon Peter. (To RUTH) And your name should be Martha.

RUTH

Why?

BROOKE

(Taking the glass from tray as RUTH offers it to him)

Thank you. I'm afraid you wouldn't understand. (To others as RUTH passes the wine.) But somehow I feel as though I had been taken back nearly two thousand years and that I am standing in a little house in Bethany. That's what your words and your art have done for a poor crazy poet, Anton Rendel. Why, I can almost fancy that in the distance I hear a crowd, chanting their Hosannas while they hear that the Messiah has come as a man to their humble village!

*(As BROOKE is speaking, there comes from the distance a sound of singing. They all pause, listening. Something like surprise and awe on the faces of the three men.)*

ANTON  
*(Simply)*

It is the choir. The Elders have just announced that their choice is made for those who are to play the sacred rôles.

*(MOTHER comes to the door of the kitchen.)*

MOTHER

Anton! Anton! Do you hear? The choosing time is over. We shall know to-night who are the happy ones!

ANTON

Yes. That is the only sad thing about our play, gentlemen. There will be many heartaches and disappointments to-night among those who have hoped and prayed these ten years past for some great honor to fall on them, or on their dear ones.

*(MOTHER presses her clasped hands against her bosom and her lips move as if in prayer.)*

RUTH

If Simon should be chosen, we would not be able to go away to-night.

ANTON

Oh, yes, you will. The work on the play will not begin for more than a week.

ADAMS

Will you excuse me, please.

ANTON

Certainly.

ADAMS

Thanks. I say, fellows, I'm here on a commission to do the Passion Play for the Herald, so I've got to get up to the town hall to see what's happening.

VAN VEEN

All right, suppose we come back to-morrow and talk prices with you, Anton Rendel?

MOTHER

Not with Anton—with his assistant.

ADAMS

Good-bye, all. See you to-morrow!  
(*He goes out quickly.*)

VAN VEEN

(*Raises the remainder of his glass of wine*)  
Here's to the little bride.

MOTHER

Wait a minute; here's the little bride.  
(*MOTHER goes to RUTH and brings her forward.*)

VAN VEEN

A long and happy married life.

RUTH

Thank you.

BROOKE

*(Raising his glass)*

God's blessing on this house.

ANTON, RUTH, MOTHER

Amen—Amen.

VAN VEEN

*(As they drink)*

Amen. That's pretty good for a pagan and an atheist.

BROOKE

*(To ANTON)*

Thank you, for a very wonderful experience.

*(Takes hat and coat from sofa. VAN VEEN takes his hat from chair, goes to door. NATHAN comes back from kitchen carrying carvings.)*

NATHAN

Here are some of your best things, Anton, that I found outside.

ANTON

Thank you, Nathan, these gentlemen may come back to-morrow.

BROOKE

*(Turning to door)*

Good-bye!

ANTON

One moment, sir. (*He takes up the carving of the Magdalen at the foot of the Cross.*) You have seen some beauty in this. I should be very happy if you would take it as a gift.

NATHAN

What!

BROOKE

Oh no; I *couldn't*!

MOTHER

Oh!

ANTON

I heard you say that you are a poet. I know you have eyes that see what is hidden from many. Won't you do a brother artist this favor?

BROOKE

If you put it like that——

ANTON

I loved that piece of work when I was doing it. I would like to think of it belonging to one who saw its message.

(*BROOKE hesitates but the look on ANTON'S face makes him slowly take it.*)

BROOKE

Thank you. It will be my dearest possession.

NATHAN

Oh!

BROOKE  
(To MOTHER)

You are quite right. When we come to talking business to-morrow, it must be with Nathan.

NATHAN

Yes, I think it must!

VAN VEEN

Good-bye!

(*He goes out.*)

ANTON

Will you wrap it up, Nathan?

BROOKE

No, don't trouble.

(*He throws the light coat around the carving, turns to door; then comes back again to*

ANTON.)

When I first saw you I was sure——

ANTON

Sure?

BROOKE

Oh, nothing. (*Hesitating*) Tell me, how does one know when the spirit of Christ speaks within one.

ANTON

*(Gently)*

It comes like flowers in the night.

*(BROOKE looks at him a moment and understands.)*

BROOKE

Thank you. Good-bye.

*(He goes out slowly.)*

MOTHER, RUTH, ANTON

Good-bye!

MOTHER

*(Reproachfully)*

And you gave it away!

NATHAN

Never mind, never mind. They're coming back to-morrow.

*(He goes into kitchen.)*

MOTHER

If it wasn't for Nathan, I don't know what would become of us.

ANTON

Don't scold me, Mother.

MOTHER

Six weeks' work and a gift to a stranger.

ANTON

But he wasn't a stranger when he left. A love of beauty is the greatest bond in the world, little Mother.

MOTHER

Fine words.

RUTH

Don't be cross with Anton on my wedding day, Aunt Mary.

MOTHER

But——

ANTON

Thank you, Ruth.

RUTH

Besides, she is just as bad as you are, Anton. Look what she gave me.

*(Holds up the veil.)*

ANTON

What is it?

RUTH

A wedding veil—stupid!

ANTON

*(Sitting by table)*

Oh, of course.

MOTHER

Anton is like his father. He never notices women's clothes; no, nor the girls that wear them.

ANTON

That is mother's other grievance, Ruth. She wants a daughter-in-law.

MOTHER

Yes. I'm going to miss Ruth after she leaves to-day. Women like women's talk as much as men like men's talk. It would be such a wonderful comfort to have a girl about the place, not to speak of the little children that I'm longing to hold on my knees.

RUTH

Haven't you ever found a girl that you could love, Anton?

MOTHER

I had great hopes once, but they came to nothing.

RUTH

Was she a girl of this village?

MOTHER

Yes; but you wouldn't know her.

ANTON

*(Half whimsically, but with a suggestion that the memory hurts him)*

Please, mother——

MOTHER

She went away before you came here—just vanished in the night, like a swallow at the first touch of frost.

RUTH

I wonder if that could be the girl that Simon told me of?

ANTON

*Simon* told you? (*Leans forward*) What did he tell you?

RUTH

We were out walking together on the upper mountain road and as we passed a funny tumbled-down cottage an old woman came running out and caught hold of Simon's arm and said: "Where is she? Tell me where she has gone?"

MOTHER

That's Marna Lynd's aunt, poor crazy old Anna.

RUTH

(*To* ANTON)

Yes, Simon said she was crazy and that her niece ran away because she used to beat her.

MOTHER

That's all true enough.

ANTON

(*Thoughtfully*)

And so she thought Simon knew something of her going away?

RUTH

Yes; but, of course, *he* didn't.

ANTON

No-o, of course not.

RUTH

You don't mean you think he really *did* know?

MOTHER

Not if he told you he knew nothing about it.

*(SIMON BROCK, who now enters, is a well-built, handsome young mountaineer. There is nothing evil about him. He has the common human instincts but he has not yet learned the bitter lesson of how far astray one wrong action may lead. His eyes go immediately to RUTH and in that glance is an intense adoration rare indeed in the wooing of these simple villagers. He is dressed for the wedding.)*

SIMON

Well, I'm here!

RUTH

Simon!

MOTHER

Go on, kiss him! Are you bashful?

*(She watches RUTH run happily to SIMON, and as they embrace, she smiles.)*

RUTH

Don't tell me it's time for us to be starting?

SIMON

Yes, it is. You know there's a lot of writing to be put in that parish register.

RUTH

Well, it won't take me but a minute or two to slip on my communion dress. And, look, Simon, I've got a veil. Real lace, it is.

SIMON

*(Slipping his arm around her)*

It's beautiful.

MOTHER

'Twas mine at my own wedding. I kept it all these years *(Looking at ANTON)* in the hopes that my daughter-to-be might wear it.

SIMON

Well surely it's not too late?

ANTON

Yes, it is Simon; it is too late.

*(He turns abruptly and goes out of the door that leads to the kitchen.)*

MOTHER

I will help you with your dressing, dearie.

*(She goes upstairs and then off.)*

RUTH

Thank you, Aunt Mary. Where is my wreath?

SIMON

Don't spend too much time on your prinking.

RUTH

*(Taking wreath)*

And you didn't spend an hour, I suppose, soaping down your hair till it looks as shiny as a pair of Sunday boots?

SIMON

Yes; but my hair is wild and stubborn.

RUTH

And the hair is like the nature, they say. If so, I'm going to have a hard time training you.

SIMON

Not you. I'm just like clay in your pretty little hands. *(Goes to her)* I love you so, one whole lifetime will never be long enough to tell you how much.  
*(Holds her close and kisses her.)*

RUTH

*(Pressing away from him)*

My, but you mountain men are strong lovers.

SIMON

And who wouldn't love you?

RUTH

All the same, I wish you were a little clumsier about it.

SIMON

Clumsier? Why?

RUTH

Then I wouldn't be always fearing that you must have had practice.

*(She runs up the stairs, throws him a kiss from the landing. Then she goes off. SIMON'S mood abruptly changes as though something were troubling him. He slowly goes to the door and looks off over the valley, as ANTON enters from kitchen, carrying a heavy piece of wood; it is the arm of the cross, dowelled and repatted.)*

ANTON

So the happiest day of your life is come at last, Simon?

SIMON

*(Without turning)*

Yes, yes.

ANTON

Old Nathan, who sets great store by omens, tells me there isn't a cloud in the sky.

SIMON

Yes, there is—there is one cloud. I can see it from here.

38 THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

ANTON

But not a large one?

SIMON

*(Impressively)*

No larger than a man's hand. *(Seeing ANTON lift the upright of cross, he goes to him.)* Let me help you with that.

ANTON

Thank you, Simon.

*(They place the piece on the work bench.)*

SIMON

A cloud like that may grow, Anton.

ANTON

What is it? What do you fear?

SIMON

I don't know. It's just a feeling of unrest, like the unrest in the air that warns cattle of a coming storm.

ANTON

But no storm is coming to you and Ruth.

SIMON

I wonder.

ANTON

*(Puts his arm about his shoulder)*

What's troubling you, Simon? Surely you can trust me?

SIMON

*(Smiles, puts his hand on ANTON's)*

Of course, I trust you, Anton. I'd trust you with my life.

ANTON

Then speak out. Truth is the sun that will drive away all these clouds of yours.

SIMON

That's it. If I only dared to tell Ruth the truth—but I don't. And that thing which I don't dare to tell will lie down with us at night and rise up with us in the morning. It will be a shadow always at my shoulder, waiting for the hour when a chance word shall betray me. *(His head drops a moment. Then he looks up at ANTON.)* You may thank God, Anton, you have nothing hidden in your heart that you daren't let out into the light.

ANTON

But surely little Ruth loves you so——

SIMON

She would never understand how I could have lied to her—lied with my lips against hers. Anton, I am not worthy of her!

ANTON

Is any man worthy of a girl who comes as Ruth does—out of the dawn?

SIMON

Yes; you would be.

ANTON

I? Oh, no!

SIMON

But you have never sinned as I have sinned.

ANTON

Perhaps I have never been tempted as *you* may have been.

SIMON

Yes, I was tempted. (*Turns away*) And so I tempted her. I betrayed her.

ANTON

You loved this girl?

SIMON

Was it love if I could forget so easily?

ANTON

Was it Marna Lynd? Tell me.

SIMON

(*Turns to him*)

Why, no. Marna? Why should you think of her?

ANTON

She went away soon after you had gone down to the valley to build that new church.

SIMON

She went away because that crazy woman was cruel to her.

ANTON

Yes. (*Suspecting*) Yes, of course. (*After a second's pause, moves toward him.*) Simon, you shouldn't let this thing, whatever it is, stand between you and Ruth.

SIMON

You mean that I should *tell* her?

ANTON

If you don't it will grow unseen by you both.

SIMON

I daren't tell her!

ANTON

And yet when you climbed the new church steeple to set a cross on the top, they said you were the bravest man in this village.

SIMON

Yes. But I'm not brave enough to risk losing her love and respect; and that love and respect mean more to me than life itself.

ANTON

You will win her respect all the more because you dared to make this confession to her.

SIMON

You wouldn't have me tell her now?

ANTON

In all honor you should tell her before your marriage.

SIMON

(*Apprehensively*)

Then you *do* think she may refuse to go on with the wedding?

ANTON

No, I don't. I don't think so.

SIMON

But you're not *sure*? And I'm not sure. Ruth might tell me to go back to the girl I wronged. She may feel that that is *right*.

ANTON

You should give her the chance to decide that.

SIMON

But that isn't possible. The other girl is not here.

ANTON

Is not here? You told me the truth just now when I spoke of Marna?

SIMON

Why, certainly.

ANTON

And there is no way for you to make amends to the other woman?

SIMON

No. I don't know where she is. I doubt if she is even living.

(NATHAN comes in from the kitchen, carrying RUTH'S chest.)

NATHAN

Here's the little bride's treasure chest.

ANTON

Let me give you a hand with that, Nathan?

NATHAN

No, no. I can manage it. I'll lash it in the back of your cart, Simon.

(As NATHAN goes to the door ANTON places the arm of cross in position on upright piece so that the cross is made. SIMON stands silently leaning against post.)

Ah! Here comes Jonas Kurz. Be careful that you say nothing that he can distort with that evil tongue of his.

ANTON

(Placing the wooden pins in cross)

His hatred of your race makes you bitter, Nathan.

NATHAN

The hatred of such people is only an honor. But I

can't stand having to listen to his unending boastings of what a great actor he is.

JONAS  
(*Outside*)

Anton! Anton!  
(JONAS enters excitedly.)

(NATHAN will presently liken JONAS KURZ to Judas Iscariot, and there is indeed a strong resemblance, for envy of the beloved disciple John moved Judas to his Master's betrayal far more than the thirty pieces of silver; and JONAS is envy personified. For the rest, he is a fine looking man with hair and beard trimmed to make him eligible for the rôle of the Christus. He struts a trifle and obviously has a good opinion of himself.)

ANTON  
Come in, come in, Jonas.

NATHAN  
Ah!

JONAS  
Ah! (*Passing NATHAN contemptuously*) I stopped a moment on my way back to my house to tell you the news. The committee have finished their choosing and have come out of the Town Hall.

ANTON

Yes; I heard the choir.

JONAS

They're in the church receiving the blessing on their work before starting round to make announcement to the lucky ones.

ANTON

Let us hope they have chosen those most worthy.

JONAS

From what folk are saying, I think the committee is waking up, and caring a bit less about getting good *men* and more about getting good *actors*.

NATHAN

Meaning Jonas?

JONAS

That's what the strangers coming here from all over the world want to see—good actors.

ANTON

That should be thought of, too. Yet we don't give the play to catch the money of curious travellers, but for the Glory of God.

JONAS

I was speaking just now with an American who has come here to write about the play, and he tells me

that Americans didn't choose their actors just because they've lived good, pure lives; they think about art.

NATHAN  
(*Sarcastically*)

All of which is to say that Jonas expects one of the best parts to come to him.

JONAS  
And why not? *And why not?* Wasn't my Barabbas the talk of the last Passion Play?

NATHAN  
Yes, you played a thief quite well. Perhaps this time they'll try you with Judas.

JONAS  
Judas! Me! No, friends. (*As the church chimes strike in the distance.*) Rumor says they've chosen me for the highest honor of all.

NATHAN  
(*Laughing derisively*)  
What! *You* to play the Christus? Why, they might almost as well choose *me*.

JONAS  
Don't forget I was asked to come and play in a real theatre in Berne after they saw my Barabbas.

ANTON

Yes, you play well, very well, Jonas. And your fine work will be an honor to the village, whether you play a great rôle or a small one.

JONAS

Acting isn't work to me. I have the gift for it. (NATHAN *laughs as JONAS glares at him.*) I think I hear the church bells. If I don't hurry they'll be getting to my house before I do.

(*He goes out.*)

NATHAN

(*Laughing as he picks up RUTH's chest and starts out*)

He has the gift! Jonas playing the Christus! Well, as a good Jew, I'm glad they're not getting him to play Moses.

(*He goes out laughing.*)

RUTH

(*From upstairs*)

Come on, Aunt Mary!

(ANTON *detains SIMON, who has started after NATHAN, on hearing RUTH's voice.*)

ANTON

No, I'll help Nathan lash the chest in your cart, Simon. You stay here and tell Ruth.

SIMON

(*Meeting his gaze*)

Tell her——?

ANTON  
(*Firmly*)

Yes.

SIMON

Very well, I will.

ANTON

God be with you.

(ANTON goes out after NATHAN as RUTH enters wearing a simple white dress with her bridal wreath and veil.)

RUTH

Well, how do I look?

SIMON

(*Gazing at her, fascinated*)

Like the Snow-Princess we used to read about in the fairy books when we were children.

RUTH

(*Smiling*)

A snow princess? Oh, I'll try not to be quite as cold as that to my Fairy Prince.

SIMON

(*Taking hold of her arms and drawing her to him*)

Oh, but you're the sweetest thing God's sun ever shone on!

RUTH

Oh! Be careful or you'll be spoiling all the work we've done ironing this dress.

SIMON

*(Catches her hand)*

Oh, never mind that!

RUTH

But I do mind. And all the girls that would like to have married you, standing in their doorways to see us go by. I'm thinking you'll have time enough for hugging me later on.

SIMON

*(More soberly)*

Will I? I wonder?—Ruth, I want to tell you something.

RUTH

What is it, dear?

SIMON

Ruth, I'm not worthy of you.

RUTH

Of course, you're not. I'm such a wonderful girl. I deserve a real prince not a fairy one; and a golden palace to live in and two little black pages to carry my train. *(She playfully curtseys.)* Oh, how do you do? I'm so glad you've had the pleasure of meeting me.

SIMON

*(Embracing her, impulsively)*

Oh, you're adorable! And you're mine! Mine!

I love you and you love me and mistakes and sins can't alter that!

RUTH

*(Startled by his vehemence)*

Why, Simon, what are you talking about?

SIMON

You are more to me than air or food or sunshine. I don't care to wake to a new day unless I wake to find you in my arms.

RUTH

Simon, you're so strange; you're frightening me.

SIMON

*(Still holding her in his arms)*

Listen, dear; long ago I did something wrong; something I've repented bitterly; that I'd give all I have to undo. I want to tell you now and ask your forgiveness. *(She presses away from him.)* But I want you—I want you to say you forgive me without my telling you.

RUTH

You mean you did a wrong to *me*?

SIMON

Oh, no, dear, no.

RUTH

Then why should I forgive you? Unless——?

*(Steps away as he holds her hand in both of his.)*

Simon, you don't mean that it's something that might stand in the way of our marrying?

SIMON

No, no, dear.

RUTH

No other woman has any greater claim on you than I have?

SIMON

No, dear!

RUTH

Because if she has, Simon, I want you to tell me now, before it's too late.

SIMON

*(Fearfully)*

Too late! *(Trying to read her mind.)* You mean that if it were something like that you wouldn't marry me?

RUTH

Not if I thought you belonged to someone else, no.

SIMON

*(Embracing her, with an effort, turning his head away)*

Well, it isn't, it isn't anything of that sort, Ruth.

RUTH

*(Smiling)*

Then I'm quite willing to take this dreadful thing

52      THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

on trust, and forgive you without asking any questions.

SIMON

*(Kissing her hand)*

Thank you, dear.

RUTH

*(Impressively)*

Simon, you know all I'm giving you?

SIMON

Yes.

RUTH

It's for always.

SIMON

For always.

RUTH

Keep me happy, dear one. *(They kiss reverently.)*  
Now, come. We're late, you know. *(Calling)* Good-  
bye, Aunt Mary!

MOTHER

*(Upstairs)*

Wait a minute, dear.

*(ANTON enters. He looks at SIMON to see if he has told RUTH and from SIMON's assumed manner, is sure that RUTH has forgiven him.)*

ANTON  
(*Happily*)

There: the chest is made fast ready for the journey.

RUTH  
But you and Aunt Mary are coming to the church?

ANTON  
Oh, yes. We'll start as soon as we hear the first bell peal. May I kiss her, Simon?

RUTH  
Of course, you may.

ANTON  
(*Puts his hands on RUTH's shoulders and kisses her on the brow*)

God keep you both! You will never regret, dear, what you did just now.

RUTH  
(*Puzzled*)  
What I did just now?

SIMON  
(*Quickly*)  
I told Anton I was going to ask your forgiveness.

ANTON  
I'm glad.

RUTH

*(Just a bit puzzled)*

Oh, yes.

*(MOTHER has entered, coming to RUTH, and embracing her.)*

MOTHER

Ruth, dear! Excuse a silly old woman's tears, darling. It seems people must be sad a little when they are happy. Women will cry at weddings, I don't know why.

RUTH

Yes, I feel like crying, too.

*(Her head drops on MOTHER's shoulder—both crying.)*

ANTON

Oh, but you mustn't; that would never do. A weeping bride going up the street, eh, Simon?

SIMON

No, that's true.

MOTHER

You must stop here on your way down for some cakes I baked.

RUTH

Of course, we will.

MOTHER

May God send you every blessing.

SIMON

Thank you.

*(Amid general good-byes RUTH and SIMON go out as ANTON and his mother stand looking after them. People outside are heard shouting after the couple—and a number of children are laughing happily.)*

ANTON

The cloud has grown bigger.

MOTHER

Yes, I'm afraid there's a storm coming.

ANTON

Look. The children are pelting them with flowers.

MOTHER

It's a pretty sight: a wedding.

ANTON

One boy is running behind trying to tie an old boot to the chest.

MOTHER

I must be getting on my bonnet, I suppose.

ANTON

*(Calling off)*

Tim! Timmy! Agnes! *(The children cry back "yes, yes.")* Come here, I've got something for you.

*(There is the sound of an answering childish shout. MOTHER goes slowly up the stair; she pauses again on the landing just long enough to see him stoop and gather two running youngsters into his arms. Then she goes up sadly into her room.)*

AGNES and TIMOTHY are just a little girl and boy of eight and ten respectively. They are much like any little girl and boy that one may happen to know and be very fond of. AGNES carries an old boot, tied to a piece of red ribbon and swings it about.)

TIMOTHY

What is it? A whale?

AGNES

With Jonah inside him?

ANTON

*(Taking the boot from her)*

It's a dragon this time. You go over there and sit down, children.

*(AGNES runs for the armchair but TIMOTHY beats her to it.)*

I found him out in the woods. I only had to carve him a little and put on two buttons for eyes.

*(Taking the dragon from the seat at fireplace.)*

AGNES

Two buttons for eyes!

TIMOTHY

Is it mine?

ANTON

Yes.

TIMOTHY

It's mine.

ANTON

Oh! I'm making a wooden doll for Agnes, but it isn't quite finished yet.

AGNES

How big is it?

ANTON

*(Measuring the doll by extending his hands wide apart)*

Oh! It's about——

AGNES

*(Her eyes popping out)*

Oh!

ANTON

*(Bringing his hands close together)*

So big. (AGNES laughs) There's your dragon, Timmy.

TIMOTHY

Oh, it's got teeth!

AGNES

Say thank you, Timmy.

TIMOTHY

Thank you, Anton.

AGNES

*(Sitting on the arm of ANTON's chair)*

Has Ruth gone away to get married, Anton?

ANTON

Yes.

AGNES

And now she'll have little girls and boys like us.

ANTON

We hope so.

AGNES

Has she decided which she'll have first?

TIMOTHY

I'm going to have mine all at once so they can play together better.

ANTON

A very good idea.

TIMOTHY

I thought so.

AGNES

Why don't *you* have little boys and girls, Anton?  
Don't you like them?

ANTON

*(Drawing her to him)*

You know I like them!

TIMOTHY

I s'pose they make too much noise while he's working.

ANTON

Oh, no, I shouldn't mind that.

AGNES

Can't you find a woman that'll marry you?

ANTON

*(Laughing)*

You've guessed it at last.

AGNES

*(Putting her arm around his neck)*

Never mind. I'll marry you when I'm grown up.  
And then you can order just as many children as you like.

TIMOTHY

That's silly. You know all the women in the village would like to marry Anton. Why, there isn't any

other man can carve animals out of sticks! (*Going over to him*) Tell us a story, Anton.

AGNES

Yes!

ANTON

What kind of a story?

TIMOTHY

(*Sitting beside him*)

About the dragon.

AGNES

No; about the lost sheep.

TIMOTHY

I like dragons better than lost sheep.

ANTON

And I gave you a dragon, so now I'll give Agnes her story, eh, Timmy?

TIMOTHY

Oh, all right.

ANTON

(*In the distance the chanting of the choir is heard coming nearer*)

Once upon a time there was a shepherd who had a flock of good sheep——

TIMOTHY

One of 'em *wasn't* good.

ANTON

Yes, that's true. There were ninety and nine good ones that did just what the shepherd said, and there was one little sheep that thought he knew better than the shepherd and ran away by himself.

TIMOTHY

I wish I was a sheep sometimes.

AGNES

What is that singing?

ANTON

It's the people who are going to announce to the man they have chosen to play the Christus.

AGNES

Why don't they choose you?

ANTON

I'm not good enough.

AGNES

Your mother says there's no one as good as you are in all of the village.

ANTON

Oh, that's what mothers always say of their sons.

TIMOTHY

My mother doesn't say that about *me*.

AGNES

Keep quiet, Timmy; Anton is telling us a story.

ANTON

Well, this one little sheep ran away and was lost and the shepherd felt very sad for he kept wondering what had happened to the poor lost sheep and he knew she was very unhappy and lonely and tired——

TIMOTHY

She? It wasn't a she; it was a he.

ANTON

Of course, excuse me.

AGNES

*(In an excited whisper)*

Anton! Anton!

TIMOTHY

What is it?

*(AGNES runs to the door, opens the top half and looks out. TIMOTHY runs to sofa, jumps on it, kneeling. ANTON rises. AGNES runs back to ANTON.)*

AGNES

The Pastor! The Pastor!

TIMOTHY

*(Runs to ANTON)*

The Pastor! The Pastor!

(ANTON stands with his arms around the shoulders of the children. MOTHER on hearing the singing has come to the landing on the stairs and looks out through window. After a pause PASTOR SAUNDERS, a good, simple shepherd of this mountain flock, appears at the doorway, wearing his black cassock with the divided tie of white lawn. The singing stops.)

PASTOR

Anton Rendel!

ANTON

Ah, Pastor——

PASTOR

(Coming in)

We find you pleasantly occupied, Friend Anton.

(MARTIN, JAMES and RAYMOND, MARGOT and VICTORIA together with the villagers crowd around the doorway and into the room. The choir and others are outside under the trees.)

ANTON

Go, greet the Pastor, dears.

TIMOTHY

Good evening, sir.

AGNES

Good evening, sir.

PASTOR

How are you, my dears?

AGNES

Very well, thank you, Pastor. Anton was just telling us the story of the lost sheep. Wouldn't you like to hear it, too?

PASTOR

I? When I know it?

AGNES

But *he* tells it so well, Pastor.

PASTOR

Hush, my dears——

*(Places one hand under AGNES' chin, the other on TIMOTHY'S head.)*

In years to come you children will be able to tell that you witnessed one of the greatest events in the life of our village.

*(Impressively to ANTON amid the silence.)*

Anton Rendel, after due deliberation, and a prayerful seeking of the blessing of our Heavenly Father, you have been chosen for the highest honor it lies within our power to bestow.

ANTON

Why—Pastor—I——

PASTOR

You are to play the sacred rôle of the Saviour of

Mankind, now and for so long as your life is such that you are adjudged worthy of this great trust.

ANTON

I—I have been chosen?

PASTOR

*(Goes to him, hand on his shoulder)*

Yes, my son. Your astonishment does credit to your modesty and humbleness of spirit.

*(He makes a signal and PAUL comes through the crowd and lays on the PASTOR'S arm a folded robe—"the vestments of Christ"—and hands him the shepherd staff. AGNES runs to the mother; ANTON turns to her holding out his hand.)*

ANTON

Mother!

MOTHER

My son!

*(She comes to him. He takes her in his arms. Then the PASTOR goes to ANTON and lays the robe on his arm and hands him the staff.)*

PASTOR

*(With solemnity)*

In conferring this great responsibility upon you, we pray that your thoughts may be kept holy and your life pure. We charge you to see that this house shall be

66 THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

as consecrated ground, where no one who is given over to carnal or worldly living shall enter to defile you with their association.

ANTON

*(As he offers the prayer all bow their heads)*

Oh, God, give me Thy help to follow as far as mortal man is able in the steps of Thy Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

OMNES

*(Murmurs)*

Amen.

AGNES

Amen!

PASTOR

Come now, we will leave him. He should be alone.

*(The Villagers go out, except JAMES, MARGOT, VICTORIA, PAUL, RAYMOND and MARTIN, who wait at the door for the PASTOR.)*

PASTOR

I shall be at home to-night, my son, if you wish to visit me.

ANTON

Thank you.

PASTOR

You must be a happy mother, Mrs. Rendel, to have borne a son to this great service.

MOTHER

Every mother in the village dreams of this moment  
from the first hour that her son sleeps on the breast.

PASTOR

*(Shakes hands)*

And it has come to you. I am glad.

*(He motions to the others to leave and then  
he goes out after making the sign of the Cross.  
The choir is heard singing as all go away.)*

TIMOTHY and AGNES who have been kneeling  
on the sofa, watching them go, now jump  
down.)

TIMOTHY

It's all right, now they've gone. One, two, three.  
*(Both children together.)* Hurray!

MOTHER

Children! Children!

TIMOTHY

That's all right. Come on, Agnes, the Pastor said  
he was to be alone.

AGNES

*(Runs to door but there is something she has forgotten  
to say and she turns back to ANTON)*

Good-bye, Anton. I know now why you haven't  
got married. God wanted you for this.

*(ANTON, his hand resting on her head, kisses  
her on the brow.)*

Wait for me, Timmy.

*(Runs out after him.)*

MOTHER

My boy—my *little boy!*

ANTON

Not a very little boy now, mother dear.

MOTHER

Yes, you are my *baby*. And since it seems you're all the baby I'm to have in my old arms, you mustn't mind it.

ANTON

Why, you've got your bonnet on, already.

MOTHER

My bonnet on? Have I? So I have. I wonder how I came to do that?

ANTON

*(Laughing gently)*

Don't you remember? The wedding. Ruth and Simon.

MOTHER

Goodness. And I'd forgotten all about it.

ANTON

It must be time to go. I wonder, dear, would you

go on ahead? They'll be so disappointed if you aren't there, mother.

MOTHER

You want to be alone. I understand.

ANTON

Just for a few moments. It was so unexpected.

MOTHER

Not to me it wasn't.

ANTON

Pray for me, mother. Pray that I may be helped to do as well as I can, what Christ would have done.

MOTHER

Very well, my dear.

*(She kisses his forehead, looks at him fondly and then goes out.)*

*ANTON smiles after her. Goes to the door; stands a moment looking out; closes the bottom half of door, looks at robe, then at the staff, offers prayer, and slowly walks to the chair below the fireplace. He rests the staff in the corner below the mantel and reverently drapes the robe on the chair. Then he stands with clasped hands gazing at it, again offering a silent prayer. He goes over to the cross and looks at it for a moment, kneels slowly beside it in prayer, as it grows dark outside.*

*After a moment's pause MARNA comes to the door, opens the top half and hesitates, looking in.*

*Not long ago one would have called MARNA LYND a pretty girl. Now suffering, anxiety and the exaltation and anguish of woman's supreme experience has brushed away the bloom and left instead the stamp of individuality and character—which is beauty. She is very poorly dressed and in her bearing there is the suggestion of hopeless fatigue. She comes in, sees ANTON and hesitates.)*

MARNA

*(In a low voice)*

Anton. Anton.

ANTON

*(Raises his head)*

Marna!

MARNA

You haven't forgotten me?

ANTON

*(Rises)*

Forgotten you? Of course not.

MARNA

*(Dully)*

No, of course not. It seems such a long, long time ago that I left, but it isn't so long really.

ANTON

Why *did* you leave? Why did you run away from all your friends? We've been very anxious about you, Marna.

MARNA

(*Scornfully*)

*Who* has? That crazy woman or all the good people who told me it was my duty to obey her even though she be a bit mad?

ANTON

(*Going to her*)

You look tired, Marna.

MARNA

Yes, I've been walking two days and a half. I slept in the open last night—out under the pine trees.

ANTON

Poor child!

(*Helping her to stool where she sits.*)

MARNA

Tell me, Anton, has Simon Brock come back to the village?

ANTON

Yes; five weeks ago. He brought back with him the girl to whom he was betrothed.

MARNA  
(*Brokenly*)

Betrothed?

ANTON

Yes; they are up in the church now. I was just going there.

MARNA

You mean this day I have come back is their wedding day? (*As ANTON nods, she laughs bitterly.*) No wonder it says in the Bible that God laughs. He is able to play good jokes on us, isn't He?

ANTON

I thought it kindest to tell you straight out.

MARNA

Yes. But how did *you* know? Does everyone know?

ANTON

No one knows.

MARNA  
(*Scornfully*)

*Simon* told you?

ANTON

No. Simon didn't tell me. I guessed. I guessed it, long ago; but to-day when Simon denied it, I was sure.

MARNA

It doesn't matter. And all the time I was gone, all these long miles coming back, I knew in my heart that he didn't love me.

*(Her head sinks into her hands. 'ANTON goes to her, places his hands compassionately on her shoulders. She rises.)*

I must go on.

'ANTON

You are too tired.

MARNA

I can't stay in the village. I wouldn't have come back—only for the boy.

'ANTON

The boy?

MARNA

Yes, I thought your mother would be here and I didn't want to shock her, so I left him on the bench outside.

*(She goes out as ANTON stands surprised and irresolute.)*

'ANTON

Marna!—Marna!—This alters everything.

*(MARNA appears at doorway, with the baby in her arms.)*

MARNA

I could not stay here while his child was beating at my heart.

ANTON

Simon's child?

MARNA

Yes.

ANTON

He didn't tell me of this.

MARNA

He didn't know. He doesn't love me and it's too late.

ANTON

What can I do?

MARNA

There's nothing to do. I'll go back where I came from. I can get work at one of the hotels.

ANTON

You can't go, Marna. You're worn out.

MARNA

But who in this village, of purity and righteousness, will shelter us?

ANTON

*(He goes to her tenderly)*

You shall stay here with my mother and me. Yes.

Come, Marna. Come, my dear, and rest yourself here.  
You're cold! I'll get you some warm broth.

*(As he goes out to the kitchen she sinks slowly  
into the chair and rests there. Then her eyes  
fall on the white robe and the shepherd's staff.  
She realizes what they mean.)*

Anton! Anton!

ANTON

Yes——?

*(He comes out bearing a cup of broth.)*

MARNA

*(Pointing)*

What do these mean?

ANTON

They mean that from to-day on I am going to strive  
to do as Christ would do.

MARNA

You have been chosen to play the Christus?

ANTON

Yes.

MARNA

Then I cannot stay here.

ANTON

You *can* stay here.

MARNA

But this house is consecrated, as *you* are.

ANTON

Yes, consecrated, as was Jesus, to the service of all those who are weary and heavy laden. (*Goes to her*) Come, my dear, come and sit down. (*Takes her toward the armchair.*) Drink this.

(*He holds the cup of broth while she drinks.*)

MARNA

But think, Anton, there will be many who are only too anxious to find a reason to condemn you; men who are envious; men who coveted for themselves the honor that has come to *you*.

ANTON

Not many surely.

MARNA

Yes, yes, Anton. You are so kind and generous yourself, you don't realize how small and intolerant people can be. They will say you have no *right* to keep here in this house a woman who has sinned.

ANTON

And they condemned Him because they said: "He consorts with publicans and sinners!" But those words didn't frighten the Man in whose way I wish to tread, Marna.

MARNA

(*With a certain awe*)

Anton, you make me believe again in the goodness  
I'd grown to hate. (*Rises*) But no; I must go.  
Anton, I must!

(*Outside the merry wedding song is heard.*)

ANTON

Where will you go?

MARNA

I don't know. But what does that matter? What  
does anything matter now?

ANTON

Marna.

MARNA

What is that? Those voices? It's a bridal song.

ANTON

It's the wedding party.

MARNA

Simon and his bride? They are going to pass by  
here?

ANTON

They are *coming* here.

MARNA

Coming? (*Draws herself up.*) Then let them

78 THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

come. We'll—(*Indicating the baby*) be the first to welcome them. We'll wish them God's speed on their bridal journey!

ANTON

(*Goes to her*)

If you do wish them well, you will say nothing.

MARNA

Why should I? No, I have suffered and must go on suffering. But Simon shall suffer, too.

ANTON

What he may suffer and when is in the hands of God.

MARNA

It is in *my* hands. My happiness meant nothing to him. Their happiness means nothing to me.

SIMON

(*Outside*)

Anton! Anton!

(*ANTON beseeches her to be quiet and sit down. She goes slowly to armchair and sinks into it, her back toward the door. Her head drops over her baby so she is hardly seen.*)

SIMON and RUTH enter, followed by three or four small children, who are laughing and shouting and throwing rice at them. The children run off—their laughing is heard during the scene.)

SIMON

Anton, your mother told us the news.

RUTH

It's wonderful, Anton, I'm so glad. I can't even tell you.

(MARNA rises irresolute.)

ANTON

Thank you, my dear.

RUTH

(Seeing MARNA in the shadow)

But you are not alone?

ANTON

(Waiting tensely to see whether MARNA will speak or disclose her identity. But MARNA sinks into the chair without speaking)

I am with a friend.

SIMON

(Not recognizing her)

Anton, you said to me "this is the happiest day in your life" and now it has turned out to be the happiest day in both our lives.

RUTH

I hope you will always feel that the happiest day in your life, Simon, was the day I came to you.

SIMON

Of course, I shall. Don't you mean everything to me?

RUTH

And I am so happy I want everyone else to be happy, too. Don't you, Anton?

ANTON

If that only could be so, Ruth; but it can't. The hour that means joy to some must mean sorrow to others.

RUTH

That's so like you, Anton.

ANTON

*(Hurrying them off)*

But I must not delay you longer on your journey.

SIMON

No. It will be dark before we reach the valley road. We shall be back in our new home a week before the Passion Play begins.

ANTON

Good-bye.

SIMON and RUTH

Good-bye.

*(They go off as the laughter of children follows them.)*

MARNA

(*Passionately*)

No, no. I won't! I can't bear it! I meant to cry out but something stopped me. But now he shan't go away with her like that. Simon! Simon!

ANTON

(*Stopping her*)

Do you *want* Simon?

MARNA

Do I want him? No! I only want to let *her* know the sort of man she is taking to be her husband.

ANTON

He loves her and she loves him.

MARNA

Yes, and I *hate* him. *Hate* him, do you understand?

ANTON

(*Placing his hands on her shoulders*)

What can hate do, Marna? It can only drag down and destroy. But love can make him into something fine and noble. Think before you try to drag him down, Marna. (*She feels the force of his words.*) It is in your power to keep her happy—always.

MARNA

You mean she must never be told?

ANTON

Not by *us*. Let us make a compact, you and I, Marna. This secret shall be between us. We will never tell it, either of us. Promise me?

MARNA

*(Turns and goes slowly to armchair)*

I promise. *(Looks at baby, then at ANTON.)*  
Anton, whatever you think of me, you don't feel that he is corrupted. Tell me you don't!

ANTON

*(Goes to her, with gentle reproach, his hand under the baby's head)*

This *little* child?—Why, Marna, dear, didn't He say: "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven!"

*Curtain.*

THE SECOND ACT  
THE OPEN AIR STAGE OF THE  
PASSION PLAY THEATRE  
Four Weeks Later.



## THE SECOND ACT

*WHEN the curtain rises we see The Passion Play Theatre—or rather the portal that stands before the proscenium-arch, for the curtain of the theatre itself is down. Upon this curtain are painted in chiaroscuro a replica of Michael Angelo's Moses flanked in the side panels by Isaiah and Jeremiah.*

*Against this background PASTOR SAUNDERS is conducting a rehearsal of one of the scenes of the play: to wit, the coming of the Three Wise Men.*

*The performers all wear their costumes, but grouped on the side where THE PASTOR stands with his prompt book, are a number of understudies and helpers who watch the playing of the scene.*

*The entire assemblage is singing a chant. At its conclusion shouts of "Make way. We bear great tidings" are heard off.*

OMNES

*(Looking off)*

What is it? What has happened? *(Raising their arms.)* Welcome, stranger.

FIRST SHEPHERD

*(Entering)*

The Messiah! The Messiah has come to Judah!

OMNES

The Messiah! The Messiah! To Judah!

FIRST SHEPHERD

God has honored his chosen people. It is to our great race that the eyes of all men shall turn, to our Messiah, who shall be the Saviour of mankind.

*(The Second Shepherd enters.)*

DATHAN

Wait! Wait! What authority have you for these tidings? Where is this man who claims he is the Messiah?

SECOND SHEPHERD

There is no man. The Messiah has come as a child born of woman. This is the night of His nativity,

OMNES

*(Look at each other in awe)*

His Nativity!

DATHAN

What nonsense is this? The Messiah a new born child?

SECOND SHEPHERD

It is true. Close to midnight we were tending our flocks, good master, on the hill beyond the olive groves. Suddenly the clouds above us seemed to part and a radiance shone down upon the mountainside as though the gates of Heaven had opened.

OMNES

(*Awed*)

Through the gates of Heaven!

SECOND SHEPHERD

And then we heard the voices——

(*The chorus of angel voices sings.*)

FIRST SHEPHERD

(*Catching his arms and interrupting him*)

Hark! Hark! You can hear them now.

OMNES

Yes! Yes!

(*All turn and look off to Heaven. The women raise their arms in supplication. The Shepherds and some of the women and children kneel in prayer.*)

SECOND SHEPHERD

(*As singing finishes*)

Can you doubt now?

OMNES

No! No!

DATHAN

We must summon the Priests; they should hear of this.

SELPHA

(*Pointing off*)

Look! Look! A Caravan!

A VILLAGER

Aye indeed, a mighty caravan, and *three* men dressed  
in strange garments walking beside their camels.

DATHAN

Who are they?

SELPHA

Strangers from afar.

FIRST MAGI

(*Calling off*)

Peace be with you.

OMNES

Peace be with you.

FIRST MAGI

(*Entering with his arms raised in "token of friendship." He is followed by the other two Wise Men*)

Peace be with you!

OMNES

Peace be with you!

FIRST MAGI

Peace and good will.

OMNES

Welcome.

FIRST MAGI

Is this the village of Bethlehem?

OMNES

Yes, yes. This is Bethlehem.

FIRST MAGI

*(Turning to the other Wise Men)*

Our long journey has ended, my friends. We have but to find the child.

DATHAN

The child?

FIRST MAGI

We are three Wise Men come from distant lands to see the Messiah of the Jews.

SECOND MAGI

We bring him gifts to lay at his feet.

DATHAN

What do men of distant lands know of our Messiah!

OMNES

Yes, yes. What?

FIRST MAGI

The Angels of God have told us. To-night a child is born, who shall be as the brazen Serpent in the hands of your great Moses. *(All moved with awe.)* He shall be raised up for all men to see the goodness and beauty that would dwell upon the earth, if we could all live our lives in the pattern of His. Raise your

voices. Cry Hosanna! For this is the great day! In a humble stable stall in Bethlehem, there lies the Man of Men! The Messiah. The Saviour!

*(As he lifts his hands to heaven the entire crowd sings the Hosanna. At the end of this, the rehearsal comes to an end and they all break from their positions amid general conversation.)*

PASTOR

Very good, my children.

A VILLAGER

Listen to the Pastor. Sh!

*(They all are attentive. During this ADAMS, the newspaper man, enters and mingles with the villagers.)*

PASTOR

To-morrow we will rehearse again both the scene of The Three Wise Men and of the Garden of Gethsemane. And you will please all wear your costumes. Roman Stadler, our art director, must see the colors of the robes for his groupings. Will two of the little girls, Agnes Hettler——

AGNES

*(Running to PASTOR)*

Yes, Pastor.

*(TIMOTHY follows her. She shoves him away.)*

PASTOR

And little Ottilie——

*(A little girl who has been standing with SELPHA comes through the players to the PASTOR.)*

OTILIE

Yes, Pastor.

PASTOR

Please collect the palms and give them in charge of my sister?

*(Girls collect the palms from the choir and carry them off.)*

TIMOTHY

Can't I help?

PASTOR

No; only the little girls.

TIMOTHY

You always give the easy things to them.

PASTOR

Sit down, Timmy. I'll find plenty for you to do.

*(PAUL goes to TIMMY, takes him by the scuff of the neck, and turns him at the same time seating him. His mother shakes him and cuffs his ears. All commence to chatter and laugh.)*

PASTOR

One minute, my dears. I have just a few more

words to say and these concern you all. (*To TIMOTHY.*) Even the children.

(*TIMOTHY and a little girl come forward and sit down facing the PASTOR. AGNES, OTILIE and her little brother also run forward and sit down at the PASTOR'S feet. All turn and listen attentively.*)

In one week from to-day you will hear the cannon boom that announces the commencement of the twenty-fourth Passion Play. For two hundred and eighty years, we have kept a vow made at the time of the great plague and presented this divine tragedy in commemoration of God's mercy and to His honor and glory. I want the play of this decade to fall behind neither in beauty, in conscientious effort, nor in the reverence with which it is given.

OMNES

Yes, certainly, Pastor. Yes, we will.

PASTOR

Pray for help in these matters and work hard on every task, however humble, that has been assigned to you.

OMNES

Yes, yes, Pastor. We will. Certainly.

(*All bow their heads and reverently clasp their hands as he offers prayer.*)

PASTOR

May the blessing of our all-merciful Father rest upon your efforts.

*(The choir chants the Amen. After the singing stops there is a hushed silent prayer. The PASTOR turns away smiling and a buzz of conversation immediately rises. AGNES, TIMMY and other children join hands and jump about shouting and laughing. The FIRST MAGI grabs one of the little ones and lifts him above his head. Everything in confusion.)*

SUSANNA  
(To PASTOR)

May I speak to you a moment, Pastor. It's about my dress. It's impossible.

PAUL  
(Taking her arm)

Come, Susanna, the Pastor has other things to think of besides the fit of your robe.

SUSANNA  
It isn't the fit; it's the color. It makes me look yellow.

*(VICTORIA laughs. SUSANNA glares at her.)*

PAUL  
You come on with two hundred others and stand in the back at that. Who'll see you?

SUSANNA  
Heaven sees us. The Pastor said so. And I'm not anxious to look yellow even for the saints and angels.

PAUL

Come home. (*Takes her arm, tries to lead her away.*) It's dinner time and I'm as empty as a broken kettle.

SUSANNA

(*Slaps his hand and goes to PASTOR*)  
But why can't Victoria wear my costume?

PAUL

Why, she'd look yellower than you would.

SUSANNA

Yes. But she's so yellow it wouldn't matter.  
(*VICTORIA starts towards SUSANNA. PASTOR stops her.*)

PAUL

(*Taking her arm*)

Oh, come on, I'm hungry.  
(*They go off, passing ADAMS who looks after them and smiles. The villagers and players in Passion Play go off talking and laughing in two and threes.*)

RAYMOND

Please, Pastor, couldn't you put me in a dressing-booth with someone else than Peter Gast?

PASTOR

Don't tell me you and Peter are unfriendly. That is no spirit for this place.

RAYMOND

*(Peevishly)*

Oh, we're friendly enough, but he will keep praying out loud while I'm studying my lines.

PASTOR

That's dreadful. I'll see what can be done.

*(More of the Villagers go off.)*

RAYMOND

I should think since I'm to play the Apostle Paul, I might have a dressing-booth to myself.

*(VICTORIA grabs him by the arm and leads him away. AGNES and TIMOTHY and the remainder of the Villagers have also gone off, in twos and threes, talking together as they go. SELPHA and two little children are standing by watching.)*

ADAMS

*(To PASTOR)*

Excuse me. Human nature is just about the same here as on Broadway.

PASTOR

*(Courteously)*

I beg your pardon?

ADAMS

I say, human nature is much the same the world over, isn't it?

PASTOR

Yes; the world over and from age to age, it changes very little.

ADAMS

(*Indicating*)

So this is your stage?

PASTOR

Part of it. (*Indicating*) The tableaux are shown back of the proscenium.

ADAMS

Tell me, Pastor, who makes your production?

PASTOR

Production?

ADAMS

Yes. Do you use painted scenery?

PASTOR

As little as possible. Behind this arch is a small rocky amphitheatre. We use that just as it is for the outdoor scenes. (*Places his hands to his mouth and calling.*) Martin!

MARTIN

(*Back of the Passion Play Curtain*)

Yes, Pastor.

PASTOR

Will you please raise the curtain?

MARTIN

Certainly, I will, Pastor.

PASTOR

The men are at work setting the stage for the scene of the crucifixion.

*(The curtain slowly rises disclosing two crosses on the hill of Golgotha: a memorable picture even though lacking the central figure—the Cross of the Saviour. A large tree with overhanging branches is also visible at the side and in back and at the sides are paths through the shrubbery which lead off. The place is bathed in warm sunlight.)*

*Three men are at work on the scene. JONAS KURZ is spading the earth out of a hole in which the central cross is to be set. JAMES MAYRE, with a pick in his hand, stands facing him. MARTIN GAST, a pleasant faced elderly man, is pruning one of the bushes. They are all three in their work-a-day clothes.)*

ADAMS

Great work!

PASTOR

The only thing we do is to stretch a canopy on rainy days. *(Smiles)* It wouldn't do to have Peter and John going about with umbrellas.

ADAMS

Say, I think it's great the nice, cozy way you

98 THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

people have of speaking of all these sacred person-ages.

PASTOR

Ah, they're *real* to us. That is why. I'm afraid our familiarity sounds like sacrilege sometimes to those for whom the story of Jesus is more a pious legend than an actuality. But I must ask you to excuse me, sir. I have a private rehearsal at my home and they are waiting for me. If I can be of any further service to you, pray command me.

ADAMS

I beg your pardon. There's one thing I'm not quite clear on. How long is the run?

PASTOR

(*Puzzled*)

The run?

ADAMS

Yes, how long do you play?

PASTOR

Every Sunday from the first of June to the end of September.

ADAMS

And then you lay off for ten years!

PASTOR

(*Nonplussed*)

Lay off?

ADAMS

Yes. You know. Quit. Lay off.

(CATALINA *whispers to the Pastor.*)

PASTOR

(*Laughing*)

Lay off! I never heard the expression before: Lay off!

ADAMS

What you need here is a manager.

PASTOR

Yes; but we've been running, as you call it, since 1633.

ADAMS

Since 1633! Some run!

PASTOR

Yes. Yes—I understand. (*Turns to CATALINA and VICTORIA who join him.*) Some run. What a quaint expression. Some run. I must remember that.

(*They go off laughing.*)

ADAMS

(*To SELPHA*)

This story of yours has certainly got the popular appeal.

SELPHA

Naturally. Yes. Excuse me!

(*She and the children go off. ADAMS goes up and speaks to JONAS.*)

ADAMS

I beg your pardon, where is the other cross?

JONAS

*(Looking up)*

I don't know. You'd better ask Anton Rendel. He made it.

*(Turns back to his work.)*

AGNES

*(Who has been playing on the roots of the tree with*

TIMMY)

Anton made the cross before he knew that it was to be *his* cross.

ADAMS

Is that so? I'll use that. Tell me, little girl, did he make the crosses for the two apostles?

AGNES

*(Laughing)*

*Apostles?* Those crosses aren't for apostles. They're for the two thieves.

ADAMS

Is that so? I'll remember that. Say, I never thought I'd live to regret that I played hooky from Sunday School.

AGNES

Why even little Timmy knows *that*.

ADAMS  
(*Humbly*)

I don't doubt it. I bet everybody in this town could put it all over me when it comes to the religious dope.

AGNES  
Why did they send you here? To *try* and make you good?

ADAMS  
No. I'm afraid the managing editor isn't much interested in the state of my soul. The paper had arranged with a prominent minister to come over and write about the Passion Play. But he was taken sick.

AGNES  
And are you a minister, too?

ADAMS  
No. I'm a baseball reporter.

TIMOTHY  
What is baseball?

ADAMS  
(*Horried*)  
What is baseball? Say, don't you ever pick on me again for not knowing about *your* religion.

TIMOTHY  
Oh, it's a *religion*?

ADAMS

You bet it is. Come here.

(TIMOTHY *jumps down from tree.* ADAMS  
*takes his hand.*)

You come with me. We'll go and get some other  
little heathen and I'll try and teach it to you.

TIMOTHY

(*Draws away*)

But I'm *not* a heathen.

ADAMS

Of course you're not. (*Taking his hand again.*)  
But you come with me. In my bag at the hotel I've  
got a glove and a mask and a ball. Gee, I know how  
it feels now to be a missionary.

(*They go off together.*)

TIMOTHY

(*Outside*)

Come on, Agnes, he's going to teach us that new  
game.

AGNES

Wait for me, Timothy.

(*Jumps down from tree, and runs out after  
them.*)

TIMOTHY

(*Off*)

I can't wait, you're too slow for me.

AGNES

(*Off*)

Oh, am I? I can beat you running.

(*MARTIN and JAMES now re-enter up the hill. MARTIN is carrying several wedges to drive into the ground to stiffen the cross and JAMES is carrying a wooden socket which is to be put in the hole and into which the cross is to be placed.*)

JAMES

(*Going to hole*)

Here's the socket for the cross.

JONAS

(*Indicating*)

All right. We've dug the hole for it.

MARTIN

Anton is bringing the cross down himself. I passed him on the hill.

JONAS

(*Suspiciously*)

Alone?

MARTIN

No; old Nathan is with him.

JONAS

(*Sits on rock below tree*)

Better wait till they get here and be sure the socket fits.

JAMES

It's all right. I measured the base of the cross in Anton's shop.

*(Puts the socket in the hole for the cross.  
Then he and MARTIN stamp the earth around  
it to hold it in position.)*

JONAS

Tell me: did you see *her* there?

JAMES

Who?

JONAS

The strange woman who stays within doors, and only walks out at night.

MARTIN

Some relative from Kroonwald or Berne, most like.

JONAS

Then why don't they ask the neighbors to come in and drink a cup of coffee with her?

MARTIN

You know they have no time for such things at this season.

JONAS

I know that there is some mystery about her, and that their door is kept closed and the latch set.

JAMES

Jonas is right. Else why would this woman never go with them to the church?

JONAS

Yes, tell me that, Martin?

MARTIN

Why don't you question Anton, if this woman so concerns you?

JONAS

I *did* question Nathan.

MARTIN

(*Chuckling*)

I'll wager you got little out of *him*.

JONAS

He answered that Anton had a great deal of business just now and how would I like to hire myself to help him mind it?

MARTIN

(*Laughs*)

That's just what he would say.

JONAS

Oh, so you think it funny that a Jew should be allowed to speak that way to a Christian?

MARTIN

To such a Christian as you are—surely. Besides,

he's right. This woman you talk of is no business of yours.

JONAS

It's the business of every man to guard the honor of the village. Didn't the Pastor charge us each to see that at this time especially the village should be kept pure and holy?

JAMES

Do you think the Pastor knows about this woman?

JONAS

No; for I sounded him.

MARTIN

That's strange enough surely, with all the gossips there be in this town.

JONAS

*(Raising his voice)*

Gossip or not, I want to know who this woman is, and what she is doing in the house of the man who plays the Christus!

*(ANTON and NATHAN come in, bearing the cross between them. They hear the last speech.)*

ANTON

Very well, Nathan. We will put it down here.

JONAS

*(Turning, confused, when ANTON looks at him)*

Ah, Anton. So you've brought the cross?

ANTON

Yes.

JONAS

*(After a pause)*

Well, we've made ready for its setting.

ANTON

*(Going to JONAS)*

What is it that you wish to know about my house, Jonas?

JONAS

*(Repeats as though not understanding)*

About your house? Oh, you mean what James and I were saying when you came in?

ANTON

What *you* were saying.

MARTIN

Jonas wants to know about a woman that he says is living at your house.

NATHAN

The hound that is always sniffing for refuse has had his nose well trained in his own kennel.

JONAS

That will do. I want none of your Hebrew proverbs.

ANTON

Listen to me: all of you here are my friends.

JONAS

All I wish is that you would speak out and stop the cackle of these slanderers. I have defended your name whenever I have heard them gossiping, Anton. In fact I have always tried to behave like a true friend.

NATHAN

Oh, what a mistake that council made when they failed to give you the part of Judas.

ANTON

Please, Nathan. (*To JONAS*) I had no idea there had been talk in the village about the girl that my mother and I have been sheltering.

JONAS

I have told all who spoke to me that I was sure she was some relative.

ANTON

No. She is no kin of ours except as all, who are needy and suffering, are our kin.

JONAS

Well, no one can gainsay your right to have a visitor come and stay with you.

ANTON

She is not a visitor either. She is only one who has

had her share of life's buffetings and who asks nothing but to go her way unnoticed for a while.

JAMES

She wants to be alone?

ANTON

For a little time, yes. But I have been planning, as soon as we are freed from our preparations for the play, to ask my friends to come and help make life easier for her.

JONAS

You wish me to tell this to the gossipers?

ANTON

Will you? Tell all my friends that I cannot speak more freely yet. I have given my word.

JAMES

But if she does not wish you to say her name, it must be someone who is known to us?

ANTON

*(Hesitating)*

Why, I——

NATHAN

*(Breaking in)*

Do you want to see to the setting of the cross now?

ANTON

Yes. (*He goes up and raises it; NATHAN starts to help him.*) No, thank you, Nathan. I have to carry it alone in the play. It's as well that I should know its weight.

(*JONAS draws JAMES aside. MARTIN hurries on to rock to guide the end of cross into the socket in the hole if necessary. Then he drives a wedge into the socket to stiffen the cross. The others are silent till the cross is up.*)

JONAS

(*In a low voice, to JAMES*)

There: what did I tell you! This woman is a bad lot.

JAMES

Living in the house of the Christus!

(*TIMOTHY runs in carrying a toy wooden gun.*)

TIMOTHY

Anton! Anton!

ANTON

Ah, Timmy!

TIMOTHY

Look what Ruth brought me back from the place where she's been.

ANTON

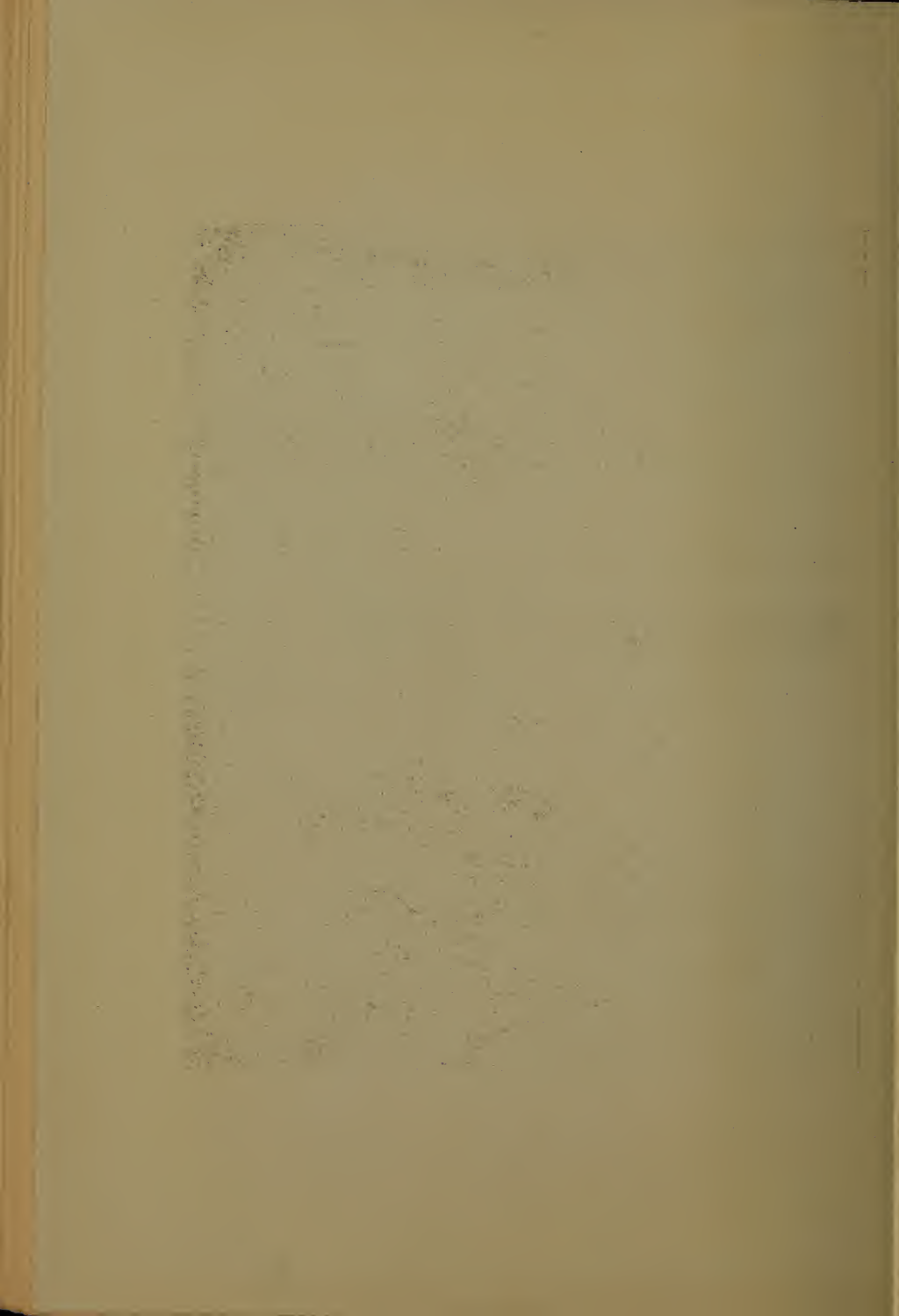
What! Have Ruth and Simon come back?

(*He and NATHAN exchange looks of pleasure.*)



ANTON: "I have to carry it alone in the play. It's as well I should know its weight."

*Act 2.*



TIMOTHY

Yes; they came an hour ago. They are up at their new house.

ANTON

I must go up and greet them.

*(He goes out.)*

TIMOTHY

*(To NATHAN)*

Isn't it a splendid gun, Nathan? Oh, I wish I could find a bear to shoot!

NATHAN

There are a couple of jackals over there.

*(Pointing to JONAS and JAMES who are talking together. TIMOTHY shortly after pretends to stalk an animal and goes out of sight in the bushes.)*

TIMOTHY

Where? Where are the jackals, Nathan?

JONAS

Well, I hope it is all right, but I don't fancy all these mysteries and concealments.

JAMES

No, the life of one who bears such responsibility as Anton should be open and fearless.

JONAS

*(Shaking his head sorrowfully)*

I'm afraid these words of his are not going to stop the tongues from wagging.

NATHAN

As to that none should know better than *you*, Jonas.

JONAS

What do you mean?

NATHAN

What ails your wits, James Mayre? And you, Martin, that you listen to the words of this fellow? Don't you know he is eaten up with envy? Can't you see how he hates the man who was given the honor *he* hoped to win? He wanted the rôle of the Christus himself. He felt he had the gift for it.

JONAS

It's a lie.

NATHAN

A lie, is it? Then if it isn't for malice, why did I find you skulking about Anton's house in the dark and trying to peer through the crack of the shutter?

JONAS

*(Goes toward him, raising his arm)*

By Heaven, if you weren't an old man!

NATHAN

*(Contemptuously)*

Strike me. Don't let that stay you. I'm a Jew, remember!

JONAS

Yes, you're a Jew and we've borne with you here because your friend, Anton, took you under his wing. But wait; Anton's power here may fail and when it does, I warn you, you'd better start quickly back down the road that brought you here.

JAMES

That is right.

NATHAN

Yes; "drive the Jew from your gates!" "Cleanse your Temples!" No matter that those temples were given you by a Jew. Have you, who hate the Jew so bitterly, ever stopped to think that if it were not for *our* race you would have no Holy Book, no Apostles, no Saviour? Very well, my friends, if Anton's is the only Christian voice that will speak for me: when that voice is unheeded I will be glad to take up my staff and go back to my own people!

*(Draws himself up proudly and goes out.)*

MARTIN

Is it true, Jonas, that you tried to peep through Anton's shutter?

JONAS

(*Defiantly*)

And what if I did?

JAMES

It is right to do anything to keep a scandal from touching the village.

TIMOTHY

(*Coming in*)

Where has Nathan gone?

JONAS

Timothy! Oh, Timmy! Come here.

TIMOTHY

Yes?

JONAS

Tell us, Timmy, you live next door to Anton?

TIMOTHY

Yes.

JONAS

And you go often to his house?

TIMOTHY

Anton is my friend.

JONAS

We want to ask you, Timmy, about the woman who is staying at Anton's.

TIMOTHY

I like her.

JONAS

Do you know her name?

TIMOTHY

Anton calls her Marna.

JONAS

*Marna!*

MARTIN

*(Steps toward TIMMY)*

Not Marna Lynd?

TIMOTHY

I don't know.

JONAS

Of *course*, it's Marna Lynd!

JAMES

Didn't I say his words showed it must be someone known to us?

JONAS

That wild creature!

JAMES

*(To TIMOTHY)*

What is *she* doing there?

TIMOTHY

I wish she wasn't there.

MARTIN

Why?

TIMOTHY

Anton's mother is always saying we mustn't play see-saw with the long-boards any more like we used to, nor laugh, nor talk out loud.

JAMES

And why not?

MARTIN

Anton said she was sick.

TIMOTHY

No. It isn't for her we must keep quiet, but the baby.

JAMES

(*Looks at MARTIN dumbfounded*)

The *baby*!

JONAS

So that's it!

MARTIN

My wife said at the time when Marna left that that must be the reason.

JAMES

And she's so bold and shameless she brings her child back to the village.

JONAS

And into the sacred home of the Christus!

MARTIN

Anton surely should know better than to give lodging to a wanton at this season.

JONAS

If this gets about a fine mock they'll make of our vows of holy living.

MARTIN

It *mustn't* get about.

JAMES

(*Starting*)

We must tell the Pastor at once.

MARTIN

(*Stops him*)

No, no, wait. Anton has always been a good friend and neighbor to us. And it is not for us to turn tale-bearer against him.

JONAS

Are you going to let this woman stay in his house till the strangers begin to gather in the village?

MARTIN

But can't we be rid of her without running to the Pastor like a pack of children? No, no. We will see the girl ourselves and tell her she must go.

JAMES

What do you think, Jonas?

JONAS

'Tis just the same as telling: to go to the house and turn her and her child down the road.

MARTIN

No; we won't do that either. We'll send for her to come here and talk with us. (*Turning to TIMOTHY who is stalking in back.*) Timmy!

TIMOTHY

Yes.

MARTIN

Look: we want you to run fast to Anton's house and ask for Marna Lynd.

TIMOTHY

What?

MARTIN

*Marna Lynd.* Say the name clear. (*To others*) She must know that it's no more a secret. (*To TIMOTHY*) Say that she is to come *here*.

TIMOTHY

But she never goes out anywhere.

MARTIN

Say that if she doesn't come and quickly, it will mean harm to Anton.

TIMOTHY  
(*Impressed*)

Harm to Anton?

MARTIN  
Yes, run. Run quick!

TIMOTHY  
If it's for Anton, she'll come.  
(TIMOTHY *runs off.*)

SIMON  
(*Outside*)  
Hello, Timmy!

TIMOTHY  
(*Off*)  
Hello!

JAMES  
Here's Simon.

JONAS  
Be careful what you say to him of this. He is  
Anton's best friend.  
(SIMON *enters up hill in back.*)

SIMON  
Well, your work doesn't seem to be very hard this  
year.

JAMES  
Why, here's the young bridegroom.

MARTIN

Welcome home!

SIMON

We just got back an hour ago. Tell me, how is the play? What is the news in the village?

MARTIN

News we've just heard on which you can give counsel, Simon.

JONAS

*(Aside to MARTIN)*

Fool!

SIMON

*(To JONAS)*

What is it? Have those players in Berne tried to get our great actor to join them again?

MARTIN

Simon, a little while ago we learned that there is a wanton in the village.

SIMON

*(Startled)*

A wanton?

MARTIN

Yes. Lodging here in the Passion Season with a child born out of wedlock!

JAMES

And the visitors already beginning to come.

MARTIN

For that reason I say we should be rid of her as quietly as possible.

SIMON

Surely.

MARTIN

But Jonas is not agreed. He is for telling the Pastor and having her questioned.

JONAS

No, no. But I say, *we* should question her. We should know who is the father of the child.

SIMON

You mean she is one of our own village girls?

JONAS

We must be sure that he who sinned with her is not playing in the sacred drama.

RUTH

(*Calling off*)

Simon!

JAMES

'Tis your wife, Simon.

SIMON

*(Speaks in lower voice to JONAS)*

Learn what you can surely; but Martin is right: it's best to keep it quiet. The eyes of the world are on our village now.

MARTIN

We have sent for her to speak with her.

SIMON

Then tell her to take her child and leave the village at once.

*(RUTH enters over hill.)*

MARTIN

*(Detaining him)*

There is reason why 'tis better for her to wait till night-fall.

RUTH

Simon, I just met old Nathan and he tells me that Anton has gone up to our house to greet us.

SIMON

How is it we didn't pass him on the road?

JAMES

He was here when he heard that you had returned.

SIMON

Oh, then he went up through the wood path.

(SIMON and RUTH sit on rock whispering happily together.)

JONAS

(*Aside to MARTIN*)

But what of Marna?

MARTIN

We will talk with her out at the gate. And we can be mending that broken turnstile while we wait.

JONAS

I must go back to the village. I shall not be long.

MARTIN

(*Suspiciously*)

What business have you got there?

JONAS

My own business, Martin. Shall I give you the old Jew's saying? The one that made you laugh?

(*Goes out.*)

MARTIN

(*Looking after him.*)

I wonder what mischief that fox is planning.

JAMES

(*Smiling at SIMON, who has just put his arm about RUTH'S shoulder*)

What! Haven't you two had enough of loving and fondling on your bridal journey?

SIMON

No; and we're never going to have enough either.

JAMES

My wife tells me I used to talk like that but I don't believe it.

*(The men laugh and go out together.)*

RUTH

Simon, what were they asking you when I came in?

SIMON

Nothing, dear one, that you need be troubled with.

RUTH

But I don't want you to have any secrets from me.

SIMON

Secrets?

RUTH

I want to be a real mate. I want to feel that you trust me and would share everything with me, big and little.

SIMON

Yes, I know, dear; but if there are things that are ugly or would make you feel sorry and sad?

RUTH

Even those things, dear. For if sharing a joy makes

it twice as much, sharing a load makes it half as heavy. So tell me, why did you hush your voices just now, when I came near you?

SIMON

They say there's a woman living in the village who has borne a child out of wedlock since we've been away.

RUTH

Oh, Simon!

SIMON

And thinking of the vow to keep the place clean and holy, they want to send her away before the strangers begin to come.

RUTH

What have the strangers coming got to do with its being clean and holy?

SIMON

Why, they'll talk and make it seem to the world that our village is no better than any other village.

RUTH

Oh! I see. So, they make it clean by sending away a sweet, little, innocent baby instead of driving out the man who wronged this poor girl!

SIMON

Why, Ruth!

RUTH

(*With irony*)

Some stranger might ask questions about the child and its mother. That is why she must go. While the father may stay. And when she is gone the village will be clean. Yes, just as clean as any other whitened sepulchre!

SIMON

(*Goes to her*)

Ruth, what are you saying?

RUTH

Surely, *you* can make them see? They don't realize it. That is all. But they will listen to you, Simon.

SIMON

What do you want me to do?

RUTH

Tell them if they *must* have shame and punishment, to place it where it belongs: upon the man.

SIMON

But they say the girl is a wanton.

RUTH

Even then the man should be made to share. She has given a child life at the risk of her own. She has suffered. *He* has only enjoyed. Tell them that, Simon!

(TIMOTHY runs on followed by MARNA.)

TIMOTHY

*(Looking around)*

They're not here!

*(SIMON turns at the sound of the child's voice  
and sees MARNA. There is a moment's silence.)*

MARNA

*(Almost inaudibly)*

Excuse me. I was looking for some friends.

*(She turns away)*

SIMON

Marna!

MARNA

Come, Timmy, we'll be going.

*(TIMOTHY runs to her. She catches him by  
the shoulders to steady herself.)*

SIMON

*(With an effort)*

Marna, I—I didn't know you'd come back to the village.

MARNA

I've been back the month past.

RUTH

*(Sweetly)*

Are you the Marna I've heard Anton's mother speaking of?

MARNA

Yes, I'm the Marna who ran away from the village.

RUTH

I know: because someone was cruel to you. I used to feel so sorry for you when they talked of it.

MARNA

(*Rather coldly, keeping her eyes on SIMON*)  
Thank you, but I didn't deserve your sympathy.

RUTH

(*Placing her hand on SIMON's arm*)  
Well, Simon. Have you lost your tongue? You know you haven't introduced me to Marna.

MARNA

I know you are Simon's wife. I have seen you before.

RUTH

You have? (*She goes to her.*) When?

MARNA

In Anton Rendel's shop.

SIMON

You were the woman that day—?

MARNA

Yes: the hour you were married.

(*There is again a moment's pause.*) RUTH  
*feels some strain in the situation.*)

RUTH

Timmy, did you see Anton when you passed our house?

TIMOTHY

No.

RUTH

I think, Simon, I won't wait longer. I will go on to Anton's house and greet Aunt Mary.

SIMON

I'll go with you.

RUTH

Aren't you going to do what I asked? (*He doesn't understand.*) Speak to those men, dear. Make them see.

SIMON

I'll do what I can.

RUTH

I'm so glad. Are you going home, Timmy?

MARNA

(*Gazing at SIMON*)

Yes, Timmy, go.

TIMOTHY

(*Starts up after RUTH*)

All right. You needn't be afraid of anything, Ruth. I've got my gun.

RUTH

I'll wait there till you come for me, Simon.

SIMON

All right.

TIMOTHY

*(As they go off together, over the hill)*

Nathan says there are jackals in this place; but there aren't any jackals, are there?

RUTH

*(Outside)*

Perhaps he means wolves.

MARNA

Well, Simon, I have often pictured what way we should meet; but I didn't think it would be here.

SIMON

I thought that you had left the village for good.

MARNA

You hoped that I had.

SIMON

I hoped that you had found a happiness you never found here.

MARNA

I found happiness here once, for a few days in the Springtime. Do you remember? *(Bitterly)* Or have these last Spring days made you forget that other time?

SIMON

You have a right to lash me.

MARNA

No, I haven't. You're not to blame. The blame lies on the world which tells a man he must deck out his passion with a pretence of love if he would raise himself above the brutes.

SIMON

It isn't true. I did love you—only——

MARNA

Only not enough. And so you took the cruel soft-hearted way and left me without a word, instead of telling me the truth.

SIMON

I thought that you would forget me.

MARNA

And, anyway, you could forget me and not have to face tears, reproaches or pleading.

SIMON

If you knew how bitterly I've repented.

MARNA

(*With scorn*)

Repentance? What good is that? Does your repentance give me back my good name?

SIMON

Your good name? What do people know?

MARNA

Not about you. Have no fear.

SIMON

But how did they find out?

MARNA

They haven't all found out—*yet*. But they will.  
There's no helping that. Our child tells *my* story.

SIMON

*(Dumbfounded, he turns slowly to her)*  
*Our child!*

MARNA

Yes: Oh! don't pretend surprise. You must have  
guessed why I went away.

SIMON

*(Hoarsely)*

Before God, I didn't. Oh, Marna: this is terrible.

MARNA

That you destroyed my innocence is nothing? But  
that we created innocence is terrible?

SIMON

*(With sudden apprehension)*

Marna, why did you come here now?

MARNA

Why?

SIMON

Yes, tell me: were you *sent* for?

MARNA

Yes, little Timmy brought me a message. He said if I didn't come, it might mean harm to Anton Rendel.

SIMON

Anton?

MARNA

I am living in his home.

SIMON

Then it's *you*. It's you they meant! Oh! my God, and I said—what did I say?

MARNA

What is it? What do you mean?

SIMON

They said: "There is a woman with a love-child, living in this village" and *I* said: "They cannot stay here, they must be driven away."

MARNA

You said that?

SIMON

My own child! I was asking them to drive out my own child!

(ANTON enters and stands on mound looking down on them in surprise.)

ANTON

Marna! And Simon!

SIMON

(Choking down his emotion)

Anton, Marna tells me—Did you say that it is at Anton's home that you are staying?

MARNA

(Still gazing at him incredulously)

Yes.

SIMON

(Turning to ANTON)

Then you know——?

ANTON

Yes. I know.

SIMON

(To MARNA)

And who else? Tell me who else knows?

MARNA

That you are the father of my boy? No one in all the world knows that but we three here.

SIMON

Thank Heaven!

MARNA

Yes, and you may thank Anton, too. It was he who stopped me from crying out the truth that evening in his shop.

SIMON

You would have told my wife?

MARNA

*(Bitterly)*

Your wife in name she was then, while I was your wife in truth.

SIMON

But you won't tell her? You'll never let her know?

ANTON

*(Coming to them)*

Why are you afraid, Simon? Ruth knows that you wronged someone and it didn't make her love you the less.

MARNA

*(Halted)*

You told her that?

SIMON

*(As though it were wrung from him)*

No.

ANTON

*(Hardly believing)*

But that afternoon in the shop you said you told her.

SIMON

I lied to you, just as I lied to her. I hadn't the courage to tell her. You understand so much, Anton, but you don't understand love.

ANTON

No?

SIMON

You don't know what it means to love a woman the way I love Ruth.

MARNA

*(With a sudden idea as she thinks she can separate them)*

So, you thought you would lose her?

SIMON

Yes; and I should have. I know it now. And if I should have lost her then, I should lose her now a thousand times more; for I've lied to her and every lie has bred and multiplied till she'd never trust me or respect me again.

ANTON

And you think that on those lies you can build a home of happiness and love?

SIMON

You don't understand, Anton.

ANTON

(*Gently*)

Yes, I think I do.

MARNA

(*Triumphantly*)

This much your lies have done; they have placed  
your happiness in my hands.

SIMON

(*Afraid*)

Marna!

ANTON

(*With forceful dignity*)

And his happiness is safe in your hands, Marna!

MARNA

(*She looks at him*)

He cared a lot for my happiness didn't he?

ANTON

Revenge is a poor thing; one plans for it, and when  
it comes does it seem worth the taking, Marna?

MARNA

(*Lowers her head*)

You are right.

(*Turns to ANTON with her face in her hands.*)

SIMON

*(Goes to her)*

God bless you, Marna. And I will make amends—as far as I can. (MARNA *turns from him.*) Anton, some of these men have heard that Marna is staying in your house. They are waiting out at the gate to meet her and send her away.

ANTON

Who are they?

SIMON

Martin and James Mayre. (*Starts up on to rock.*) I will go to them now and try to persuade them.

ANTON

They want to send her away?

MARNA

And they are right. It is better that I should go.

ANTON

With that little child in your arms? No, no; they couldn't be so cruel, so senseless. Let me speak to them. (*Joining SIMON*) They have children, too, and I will make them see.

SIMON

Yes, they will listen to you.

MARNA

Perhaps they will let me stay somewhere else—not in *your* home.

ANTON

Why? Has that little one made you a leper? No, Marna, for all life is from God. Don't be afraid and wait for me here. Come, Simon.

*(He goes down the rock. A low murmur of the crowd is heard in the distance. SIMON pauses for a moment)*

SIMON

*(Looking after ANTON)*

If I could only be like him.

MARNA

*(Nervously)*

What's that? Those voices?

SIMON

It is the log-cutters going by on the road above.

*(He goes off after ANTON. MARNA is alone. She looks about in despair. The murmur of the crowd comes nearer and nearer. She is puzzled, then more and more frightened. She starts up after SIMON.)*

MARNA

Simon, I am afraid. Simon!

*(She is now trembling with fear. As the noise increases she gives a terrified shriek.)*

Simon!

*(The crowd now rush on led by JONAS, who has incited them against MARNA. MARGOT,*

JAMES, PAUL, RAYMOND *and* THE ELDERS *are among them. They are all saying "Where is she? "There she is." "Wanton," etc. They surge about her. MARNA has run up on the rock and stands cowering in terror, with her hands behind her, clutching the cross for support.)*

JONAS

*(Raises his arms)*

Wait! Wait! *(The crowd pauses.)* So, it is not enough that she defiles the home of the Christ! She must needs stand by the sacred cross itself!

OMNES

Shame! Shame! Take her away from there.

MARGOT

She has brought shame on our village.

JONAS

*(To the three Elders)*

What does she know of respect for holy things?

OMNES

Yes; yes.

MARNA

*(Terror stricken)*

What do you want with me?

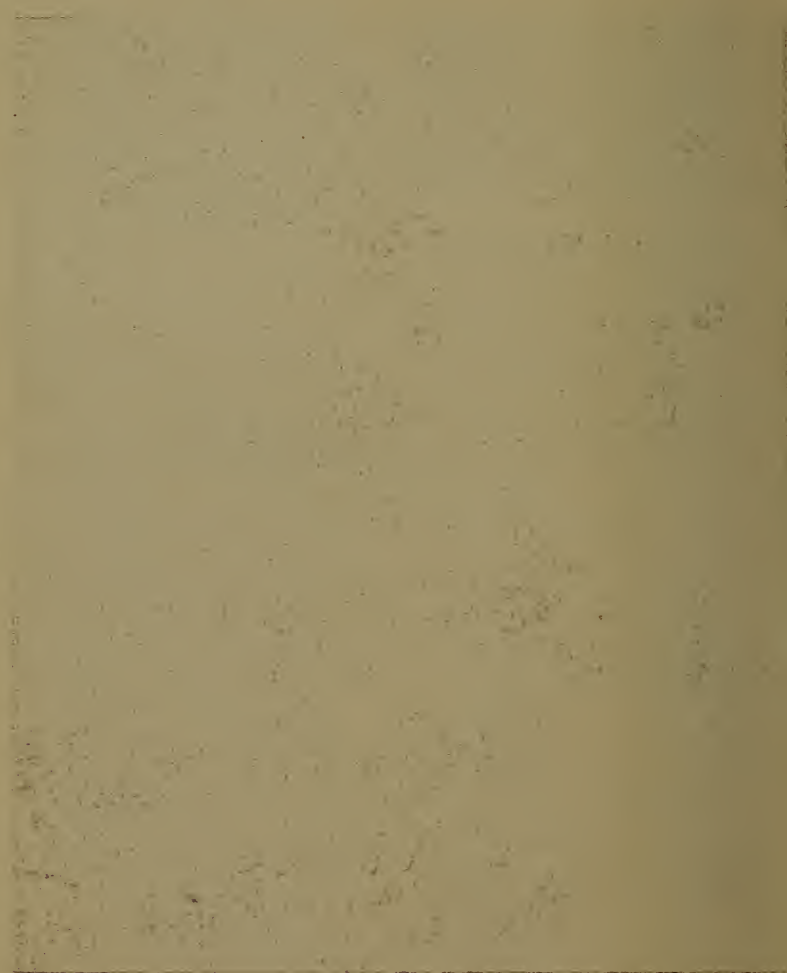
JAMES

We want to be rid of you. That is all.



JONAS: "Drive her out."

*Act 2.*



OMNES

Yes! Yes! Drive her out!

JONAS

Listen. It is no use for you to make denials. We know the truth.

OMNES

Yes, yes. We know the truth.

MARNA

I have made no denials.

JONAS

Ah, you admit that you cared nothing for your good name, nor for the good name of this village?

OMNES

She admits it.

JAMES

(To JONAS)

Don't waste time on words. Someone fetch her brat, and I'll see them past the first milestone.

OMNES

Yes. Yes!

MARNA

(Runs down to MARGOT, passionately)

Don't you dare to touch my child! I will kill anyone who lays hands on him.

MARGOT

Oh, so he is too fine for us to touch!

MARNA

Yes, he is! (*All laugh and sneer at her.*) You come to revile me and spit at me. Why—because I have sinned? No, because I have been found out! (*All turn to each other, muttering.*) Are you any better than me, Margot Haser? You sold yourself to an old man not for love, but for money!

MARGOT

I married him!

MARNA

Oh, yes, you have a gold ring to show. And you stood by him in church. But does that make you any cleaner than me?

(*Several men start to grab her. She turns on them fiercely.*)

And you men! You have never lusted after a woman, have you?

JONAS

Now, look here—

MARNA

(*Turns on him*)

And you, Jonas Kurz. Do you forget the day you tried to seize me in your arms and press hateful kisses on my lips.

(*The murmur grows to a babble of cries, overwhelming her speech.*)

OMNES

Drive her out! Prostitute! Wanton!

*(They rush at her. She turns and runs up onto the rock. ANTON comes on above. MARNA runs to him and falls on her knees, at his feet, clutching his smock.)*

ANTON

*(Towering above them all)*

Stop! Stop!

JAMES

She is defiling this place!

MARGOT

*(Crying out above rising murmurs)*

She must go! Drive her out.

OMNES

Yes; drive her out.

*(There is another surge forward.)*

ANTON

Stop, I say! *(The crowd halts.)* Must there be twenty of you to handle a defenseless girl? *(Silence.)* Come, let one man step out.

OMNES

One man!

JAMES

Whom do you want?

OMNES

Yes, yes. Whom do you want?

ANTON

A man who is without sin.

OMNES

Without sin!

ANTON

I say: have your way, drive her out, stone her!

JONAS

Stone her?

ANTON

Yes; but let him who is without sin cast the first stone!

*(There is a sudden awed silence.)*

JAMES

We have no quarrel with you, Anton Rendel.

OMNES

No. No.

ANTON

No? And why not? If you think your village has been defiled, it is *I* who have defiled it. When Marna wanted to go away, I stopped her. I took her into my house.

JONAS

Yes, and for good reason!

FIRST ELDER

Good reason?

OMNES

What's that? What did he say?

JONAS

*(To crowd)*

Why should he take her into his home unless she had good claim to be there?

OMNES

Yes, that's so. Why?

JONAS

Why has he hidden her there unless he was afraid of the questions we might ask?

OMNES

Yes, that's it.

JONAS

*(To MARNA)*

To whose house did you go when you first came back? To your old home on the hill? No!

JAMES

*(Realizing what JONAS means)*

Are you mad, Jonas?

JONAS

No, but if we care to preserve the sacredness of our great Passion Play; unless we would see the village laughed at and our holy living a byword, ask her who is the father of her child!

*(There is another murmur that grows to confused noise; the PASTOR enters through the crowd.)*

JAMES

The Pastor!

OMNES

It's the Pastor! Who told him?

*(They make way for him.)*

PASTOR

What is this? What is going on here?

ANTON

*(Coming down to him and leading MARNÄ with him)*

You remember Marna Lynd, Pastor?

PASTOR

Yes, and Stephen here has been telling me a strange tale about her. Is it true, that you have been here in the village a month past?

MARNÄ

Yes.

JONAS

In the house of the Christus—with her child.

PASTOR

So I hear. But I can scarcely believe it.

ANTON

It is true.

PASTOR

Had you forgotten that you were charged to keep your house free from all carnal and worldly associations?

ANTON

No, and I have tried to keep it so!

PASTOR

But surely you knew what others would say when they heard that this poor, erring girl was lodging with you?

ANTON

*(Without bitterness)*

Perhaps I trusted too much to the charity and kindness of my neighbors.

PASTOR

It is not only your neighbors that must be thought of. We in the village have to be far more jealous of our good name than other villages and you, on whom the greatest trust of all rests, should be careful that nothing you do could give the world cause to speak lightly of him who plays the Christus.

ANTON

If He who was the Christus had done that, there would have been small chance for sinners and outcasts to be healed and comforted.

OMNES

*(Turn to each other)*

What does he mean?

PASTOR

Anton Rendel, you are presumptuous.

ANTON

I am sorry.

MARNA

Anton took me in because there was nowhere else for me to go. I was weak and ill and footsore. I had walked with my child in my arms all the way from the hospital of the nuns at Kroonwald.

PASTOR

Doesn't your mother's sister still live on the hill above?

MARNA

Yes; a mad woman. I would sooner have begged bread along the streets than have trusted my little one to the mercy of her crazy moods.

*(SIMON enters.)*

SIMON

Anton!

*(He stops short, seeing the crowd and trying to understand what is happening. MARTIN is with him.)*

MARNA

Isn't it enough that I am ready to go now? Why must you stand here and condemn the man who was kind to me?

PASTOR

You are ready to go away?

MARNA

Yes!

ANTON

No, no. You can't drive her out with a little child at her breast.

PASTOR

No; you are right. *(Turns to the villagers.)* But some other lodging must be found for her.

JONAS

Excuse me, Pastor, but this is not the first thing. *(PASTOR turns to him.)* Ask her—ask her, while we are all here, in front of us, *who* is the father of her child.

*(SIMON is startled.)*

OMNES

Yes, yes. Who is the father?

ANTON

No, Pastor. Don't ask for that. It can do no good  
—only harm.

PASTOR

What is this? Why are you trying to shield the  
guilty?

JONAS

He has good reason!

PASTOR

It is a grave thing, Anton, that we should have one  
in our midst, one on whom we may place a trust only  
less sacred than your own, who is so grossly unworthy.

OMNES

Yes, yes. Who is he? Tell us his name?

ANTON

Stop, please. Her word is pledged.

JONAS

(*Sneering*)

Who to—to *you*?

ANTON

Yes, to me.

MARNA

(*To ANTON, through the chatter of the crowd*)

I must tell, Anton. I *must*! Don't you see what Jonas Kurz is trying to make them think?

PASTOR

Anton. (*All are silent, eager to catch every word.*)  
You know who this man is?

ANTON

Yes.

PASTOR

Then I *command* you to tell us.

ANTON

I am sorry, Pastor, but I must refuse.

PASTOR

What! (*The crowd are dumbfounded by his refusal.*) Do you want me to believe that *you* are the man?

MARNA

(*To PASTOR*)

Wait! Wait! There is someone else who knows; someone who is not pledged to silence. Ask *him*!

PASTOR

Who?

MARNA

Simon Brock.

SIMON

I?

OMNES

*(There is a babble of voices as they all look at him)*

Simon? Simon Brock?

PASTOR

Anton, your disobedience displeases me, but if Simon will speak for you—

SIMON

*(Comes down quickly between MARNA and PASTOR)*

There—there is some mistake. I cannot tell you.

PASTOR

You mean you cannot, or you will not?

SIMON

*(Looks first at ANTON)*

I mean——

RUTH

*(Calling off)*

Simon!

SIMON

*(Quickly resolving RUTH must not learn the truth, as she comes on and stands in back)*

I mean she is mistaken, I don't know.

MARNA

Simon!

JONAS

He, too, is trying to shield his friend.

SIMON

*(Rushes at JONAS)*

No. I don't know. I tell you. I don't know.

ANTON

Three times! And the poet said "your friend's name is Simon, too."

RUTH

Simon, is she the woman, they are trying to——

SIMON

*(Rushes up to her)*

Come, dear, this is not for you.

PASTOR

No, Simon; take your wife away!

RUTH

*(Not understanding)*

Why?

SIMON

The Pastor asks it, Ruth.

RUTH

But what is the matter?

*(He takes her in his arms, draws his coat about her as though to protect her and leads her off.)*

PASTOR

Anton Rendel, it is not for me to say whether or not you have sheltered in your house your own sin. But since you seem willing to let that terrible suspicion rest upon you, I tell you that it cannot rest on the man who above all others in the village, must be untainted and of good reputation.

ANTON

You mean——?

PASTOR

*(Controlling his emotion)*

I mean that you cannot carry that cross when the people gather here next Sunday! You have violated your pledge and you have stubbornly refused to bow to my authority. Therefore I am left no choice, but to take from you the rôle of the Christus.

*(MARNA gives a cry.)*

ANTON

You take it from me?

PASTOR

Yes.

OMNES

That is right. The Pastor is right! *(etc.)*

MARNA

*(To PASTOR, through the chatter of the crowd)*

No, no! I will tell you. You mustn't do this unjust thing!

ANTON  
(*To her*)

No, Marna. This is to be.

MARNA  
(*To ANTON*)

Just to save another—and such another.

PASTOR  
I am very sorry. This is a terrible thing, but I could do nothing else.

(*PASTOR goes out; the others start to follow him. MARNA breaks from ANTON and rushes after them.*)

MARNA  
(*To MARGOT*)

Fetch the Pastor back!

OMNES  
(*As they crowd through the arch going off*)  
No! No!

MARNA  
(*Turns to THE ELDERS, who are crossing below her*)

Fetch the Pastor back!

(*The ELDERS shake their head and motion with their hand—"no, no." MARNA turns and confronts JONAS.*)

Fetch the Pastor back! I will tell him who it is.

JONAS

Yes, you'd lie some other's good name away to save your lover!

MARGOT

*(Through the talk of crowd)*

You defiled his home so that his home defiles our village!

JONAS

Yes; it will be pointed out as the place where the Christ lived with a wanton.

*(ANTON goes up on the rock, and leans his head against the cross.)*

JAMES

You can stay there now, woman, as a good lesson to others—like you!

RAYMOND

But honest people will spit on the ground as they go by!

MARNA

*(Runs to MARGOT, drops on her knees clutching MARGOT around the limbs)*

Call the Pastor. I will tell him! I will tell him everything!

*(JAMES grabs her arm and loosens her hold on MARGOT, while RAYMOND helps him. JAMES throws MARNA to the ground. The crowd approves.)*

MARGOT

Who will take the word of a harlot?

(JAMES, RAYMOND, PAUL *go off.*)

JONAS

Now get your child and leave us!

MARGOT

(*Going out*)

And see that you lose no time in clearing the village of this shame.

JONAS

Yes, and take your seducer with you.

(*He goes off with the others.*)

MARNA

(*On her knees calling after them*)

Listen! Listen! Well, go then. If you won't listen. Go! Poor simple sheep that you are!

(*The noise from the crowd continues in the distance.*)

ANTON

(*Raises his clasped hands to the cross*)

Was that man right who said: Christianity died upon the Cross?

(*He leans his head against the cross—his arms about it. MARNA rises slowly and staggers over to the tree, sobbing hysterically. She drops onto rock at foot of tree.*)

MARNA

*(Her head bowed between her clinched hands)*

Curse your self-righteousness! Your intolerance!  
Your cruel goodness! (ANTON raises his head and  
turns to her.) Pharisees! (She throws up her head.)  
Talk of sacred ground. (Shaking her clinched hand  
after them.) Curse your holy village!

ANTON

*(Crying out)*

No, no; Marna!

MARNA

They say they are the keepers of the spirit of  
Christ. But they are the ones that crucified Him!  
If Christ should walk among them to-day, they would  
revile Him, spit at Him and bar Him from their  
homes!

ANTON

*(Standing at the foot of the cross with his arms out-  
stretched)*

Don't curse them, Marna! Forgive *them*! For they  
know not what they do!

*Curtain.*

THE THIRD ACT  
THE HOME OF ANTON RENDEL

A few days later.



## THE THIRD ACT

***B**ACK in ANTON RENDEL'S house. But the joy seems somehow to have left it. And this is hard to account for as it is a fine sunshiny morning in June. Most of the carvings have disappeared—perhaps that is the reason.*

*The room is empty. NATHAN enters from kitchen carrying a hand carved wooden cradle, which he places near the fireplace. He then takes a bellows from fireplace, where they are hanging, and stoops over the fire logs, gives them a few puffs—till the fire blazes up.*

*ANTON'S mother comes down the stairs carrying the pillow and comforter for the cradle. She pauses for a moment to look through the window—for she is expecting ANTON.*

NATHAN

I'm thinking that there's small reason to be lighting the fire to-day. There's a warmth in the air that I haven't felt this Spring.

MOTHER

*(Looking out window)*

It seems so often the day the Sacred Play is to start.

NATHAN

Do you see any sign of Anton down the valley road?

MOTHER

No, there's not a soul to be seen; but maybe he might come back over the log road from Kroonwald.

NATHAN

And why should he choose a hard way like that with the pack of carvings to carry?

MOTHER

There'd be less chance of meeting village folk.

NATHAN

Anton wouldn't take a step out of the way for that. His gaze is straight and fearless as though they had never tried to shame him with their black looks and their heads turned away to his "good morning."

MOTHER

Yes, he doesn't let any see it. But think how he must feel never to get any answer to his greeting—him that everybody used to love.

NATHAN

Why should he care for folk that aren't worthy to tie his boot-string?

MOTHER

They're trying to drive us out of this village.

NATHAN

Yes.

MOTHER

(*Making bed in the cradle*)

And Anton would have gone only he knows this place has been my home so long. It's forty years ago, Nathan, since I came up that path a young bride, and all the folk gathered in the road crying out a welcome, and the little children throwing flowers for us to tread on.

NATHAN

And now it's those that were little children then that threaten to burn the house if they aren't rid of us.

MOTHER

(*Alarmed*)

They said *that*?

NATHAN

Yes; but don't fear. They won't go so far. I hear the Pastor was very angry when 'twas told to him.

MOTHER

I don't know. There's no saying what men may do in the name of religion.

NATHAN

Don't I know? Don't I know? I that have seen my father hauled into the street by his beard and frightened women fleeing before men with blood on their hands and a white cross pinned on their sleeves!

MOTHER

*(After a pause)*

I wonder if I could learn to live in some new place?

NATHAN

The trouble all came with Marna's coming. If she should go I believe they would soon forget their anger against Anton.

*(MARNA enters coming down the stairs carrying her child.)*

MOTHER

Hush!

MARNA

Have you news of Anton?

NATHAN

*(A little forced)*

Where should we have news except by his coming? None will bear a message to us nor tell us if they saw him in the road.

MOTHER

Perhaps the strangers at the Kroonwald have bought only a few carvings and he pushed on through the night to Mendorf.

*(Goes to MARNA, as she comes down the stairs, to help her with the baby.)*

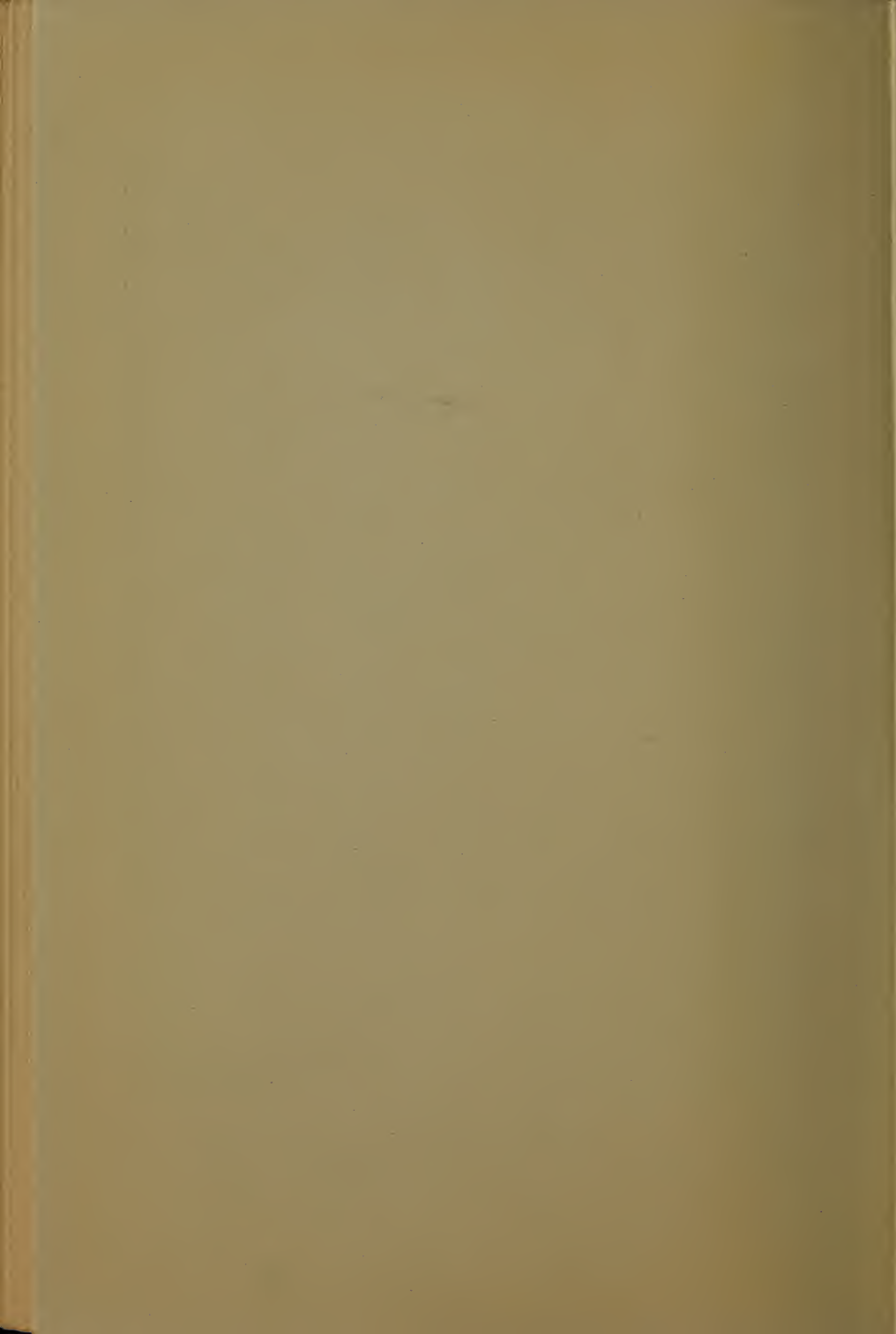
NATHAN

I wish he had let me go instead.



Anton as The Christus.

*Act 3.*



MARNA

I think he wanted to be alone for a while.

MOTHER

Yes. It will ease him to go walking through the clean-smelling meadowland and hearing the birds calling in the willow groves along the river.

MARNA

And no doubt he'd wish to be away to-day.

NATHAN

Why?

MARNA

Why? 'Tis the start of the Passion Play, isn't it? And there'll be folk going by in their robes and singing and the procession of the children.

MOTHER

Yes. When he would hear the bell ringing to call them to the rehearsing his hand would tremble so that he could scarce hold the knife.

*(She goes out into the kitchen. MARNA starts to put the baby in the carved wooden cradle which stands in front of fireplace.)*

NATHAN

How is master baby to-day?

MARNA

As happy as if his coming into the world had brought nothing but joy.

*(Kisses it, then puts it in the cradle.)*

NATHAN

And so it should I say. (*Peers into cradle.*) Heyho, baby. Oh, don't pucker up your forehead at old Nathan. Surely he couldn't scowl any worse if he were looking at Jonas Kurz.

MARNA

Sh-hush, baby.

(*She rocks cradle back and forth.*)

NATHAN

(*Bending over the cradle*)

Are you sure there isn't a pin sticking into its shoulder?

MARNA

Am I sure? What sort of a mother do you think I am? Sh-sh—That's right. Mother won't let any big man with a funny beard frighten her lambkin.

NATHAN

Funny beard?

MARNA

(*To baby*)

Sh-sh. That's right. Go to sleep. (*Glancing at the kitchen door.*) Nathan?

NATHAN

Yes?

MARNA

As I came down the stairs just now I could not help hearing what you said.

NATHAN

Eh?

MARNA

That if I should go away they would soon forget.

NATHAN

*I* said that?

MARNA

Yes, don't try to deny it.

NATHAN

Neither Anton nor his mother would let you go away. You know that.

MARNA

No, perhaps not. But if I were to go *without* their knowing.

NATHAN

And how would you be going with that baby to carry in your arms and you only just getting back your strength?

MARNA

Perhaps I could get someone to give me a lift as far as Mendorf.

NATHAN

I know one who has a good cart who might lend it to me.

MARNA

What? Someone in this village?

NATHAN

Yes.

MARNA

If there's any would be willing themselves, they'd be afraid of their neighbors.

NATHAN

The man I'm thinking of could scarce refuse that much, poor friend though he's been this week past.

MARNA

You don't mean Simon Brock?

NATHAN

I do indeed. Simon Brock was always Anton's greatest friend. Didn't they take in his wife and keep her here like one of their own all the time they were waiting for the wedding?

MARNA

You mustn't go to him, Nathan.

NATHAN

Why not?

MARNA

Go away in *that* cart—the one he drove his wife in on their wedding journey?

NATHAN

That's made it no worse, has it?

MARNA

Oh, I couldn't. I couldn't!

NATHAN

What's the matter with you, Marna?

MARNA

(*Turns to him*)

Think—think! There must be someone else.

NATHAN

No one that I know. Well, perhaps when Anton gets here we'll all be leaving.

MARNA

No, no. That mustn't be.

NATHAN

It may *have* to be.

MARNA

But Anton's mother! Think how she would feel having to leave her home, to go out among strangers and suffer hardships.

NATHAN

Listen, Marna. I didn't tell her just now and I didn't mean to tell you. When I went to the village this morning to buy food, they told me at the shop there wasn't any.

MARNA

Not any food?

NATHAN

Not, they said, for—for *you*.

MARNA

You mean they said—"not for a *harlot*."

NATHAN

That is why I said if you were to go they would let Anton and his mother stay in peace.

MARNA

Go, Nathan, go to Simon Brock. And ask him for his cart. And if he doesn't want to give it to you, tell him *why* you want it. Say it is to take the harlot and her child out of the village! He will give it to you then fast enough. I promise you.

NATHAN

Marna!

MARNA

(*Bitterly*)

Only tell him to throw new straw on it!

NATHAN

I don't understand.

MARNA

*He will understand. He will not want me to lie in the sweet grass where she rested in his arms.*

NATHAN

*(Looks at MARNA, then at the cradle as though suddenly guessing the secret)*

Marna—tell me——?

*(MOTHER comes to the kitchen doorway.)*

MARNA

I will tell you nothing. Go—go!

MOTHER

What is it, Marna? Is anything the matter?

MARNA

No. It is nothing. I want some fresh bedding for my baby, that is all.

MOTHER

But Nathan put some balsam in the cradle only yesterday.

NATHAN

*(As though bewildered by his discovery)*

Yes,—yes. I know where there is some better, with a still sweeter smell.

*(He goes out.)*

MOTHER

Were you and Nathan quarreling?

MARNA

*(Bends over the baby)*

No, of course not.

MOTHER

I thought I heard your voices raised. But my ears are not what they were. I'm getting to be an old woman, Marna.

MARNA

*(Turns to her, mastering herself with an effort and smiling)*

Oh, you're not really old. You'll hear many pleasant sounds yet, Aunt Mary. The birds nesting under the eaves and the bees in your garden and children laughing outside and Anton singing as he bends over his work.

MOTHER

*(Shaking her head)*

He doesn't sing any more, Marna.

MARNA

But he will: never doubt it.

MOTHER

*(Taking her hand)*

Will those good times ever come back to us again?

MARNA

(*Comforting her*)

Of course; of course, they will. (*She goes to the cradle.*) When the curse that has lain on you is lifted.

MOTHER

We were so happy. I didn't know how happy——

MARNA

Look at him, Aunt Mary. You wouldn't think that anything so beautiful could bring so much wrong and hatred and bitterness into the world, would you?

MOTHER

The ways of the Lord are hard to understand.

MARNA

No, Aunt Mary, I don't believe that. It's the ways of man that are dark and cruel. The ways of God are simple and straight and kind.

(*ANTON enters, carrying a bag slung over his shoulder. His boots are muddy from the roads.*)

ANTON

(*Cheerfully*)

Well, little mother, here is the wanderer at last.

MOTHER

Anton! My boy!

(*She runs to him and puts her arms about him.*)

ANTON

I hope you have plenty of food in the house. All the long way back from Kroonwald I've been kept up by a beautiful vision. My mother standing over a pan of her famous apple-cakes, all warm and brown, smelling of cinnamon.

MOTHER

Oh, what a shame! I sent Nathan to get some fresh meal but he said it hadn't come from the mill yet.

ANTON

*(Knowing she is fibbing)*

Well, it won't hurt me to wait a bit.

MOTHER

No, no. I've got some cakes left from yesterday, if you don't mind that.

ANTON

Mind it? They'll taste better to me than the first fall of Manna did to the Children of Israel. *(Takes the bag off.)* And how is the other little mother?

MARNA

I just said to Nathan that at last I am feeling as strong as I ever was.

ANTON

*(Looking at her)*

Not quite that yet. You see I've got a rosy cheek in that cradle to match yours by.

MOTHER

(*Anxiously*)

The carvings, Anton? Did you sell them?

ANTON

Did I? Never say again that I am not a business man.

(*Draws out a little chamois bag from his pocket, jingles it and gives it to her.*)

MOTHER

Oh, splendid!

ANTON

Nathan will be coming to me now for lessons in bargaining.

MOTHER

Gold pieces, Marna!

MARNA

I'm so glad!

ANTON

Yes. I even sold the King Solomon. I was almost ashamed to show them that.

MOTHER

Why the Solomon was wonderful, wasn't it, Marna?

ANTON

Oh, there's a mother speaking. Even Nathan ad-

mitted I hadn't done Solomon justice. But Solomon has gone and I really believe I might have sold a carving of each of his wives—if I could have found wood enough to do for the whole family.

MARNA

*(Hopefully, that she will be able to get work there)*  
There are a lot of visitors at Kroonwald then?

ANTON

Yes. But I sold nearly all to one man.

MOTHER

One man?

ANTON

Yes. Do you remember that poet who came here with his two friends the day that I—*(Correcting himself)* the day that you came to us, Marna?

MOTHER

The one to whom you gave the Magdalen?

ANTON

Yes. I will not shame you by reminding you how you scolded me. Cast your bread upon the waters, mother dear, and it will return to you after many days.

MOTHER

I'll get you those cakes and some coffee.  
*(Goes to kitchen door.)*

ANTON

Can't I help you?

MOTHER

What do I want with a man messing in my kitchen?  
Sit down there and rest yourself.

*(She goes out into kitchen.)*

MARNA

Anton, you have been very good to me. If there was only some way that I could repay you.

ANTON

Happiness is the coin in which we want all our deeds repaid. Only before we learn life's lesson we think that the happiness must be our own. You can make up to me for everything by trying to be happy.

MARNA

And good.

ANTON

Happiness brings goodness, Marna, just as much as goodness brings happiness.

MARNA

I shall try and remember that. You have given me many thoughts to carry away with me, thoughts that will help me even in the darkest hours. But I must go upstairs now. I want to put something in order.

*(She starts up the stairs. ANTON wearily sinks*

*into chair. The boom of a distant cannon is heard. Far in the distance the choir is heard for a little while.)*

ANTON

That's the first gun calling the players to prayer.  
The performance will begin in one hour.

MARNA

Yes, I know. . . .

*(She looks at him with compassionate understanding, then she goes quietly up the stairs. ANTON, when he realizes he is alone relaxes; his head slowly drops into his hands with his elbows resting on his knees. There is a brief pause. Then AGNES comes in the door. She is wearing the dress for the scene of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem.)*

AGNES

*(Looking in over bottom half of the door)*

Anton. *(Rattles the hasp.)* Anton.

ANTON

Agnes!

AGNES

*(Enters and runs to him)*

They told me I mustn't go to see you any more, Anton, but I just had to come and show you my dress.

ANTON

Oh, but it's lovely, Agnes.

AGNES

*(Lifting up the dress so as to show it)*

The petticoat is almost the nicest part. I wish it showed more.

ANTON

Couldn't you wear the petticoat outside the dress?

AGNES

Of course not. *(Laughs.)* Aren't men funny? But, oh, I'm so proud to think I'm going to be in the Passion Play, Anton.

ANTON

*(Goes to her)*

Of course, you should be, dear.

AGNES

Did *you* want to play in it, Anton?

ANTON

I wanted to play in it very very much, Agnes.

AGNES

Wouldn't they let you?

ANTON

No.

AGNES

I hate them for not letting you.

ANTON

You mustn't say that.

AGNES

Yes, I do. I prayed to God last night to send an awful punishment to all people that were unkind to you, Anton.

ANTON

Oh, you shouldn't have done that.

AGNES

Well, I've done it now, so it'll have to stand. I'm not going to tell God I've changed my mind.

TIMMY

*(Comes inside and looks back to see that no one is looking)*

Agnes—Agnes.

AGNES

Yes, Timmy.

TIMMY

Agnes, you know you were told not to come here.

ANTON

Yes, dear, you'd better go. Your mother will be cross.

TIMMY

Anton.

ANTON

Yes, Timmy?

TIMMY

Have you got any more dragons?

ANTON

*(He gets two small wooden elephants from the shelf)*

No. But there are a pair of elephants I was making for your Noah's ark.

*(TIMMY looks about again afraid of being seen in ANTON'S home but finally comes in, and takes his toy. AGNES takes hers and tries to make it walk.)*

TIMMY

Oh, thank you, Anton. I can't see why everybody is so angry at you, Anton. I guess they don't know what lovely animals you can make.

*(Runs to door, looks out carefully to see if anyone is looking. Then he runs off.)*

AGNES

Good-bye, Anton. Won't you see me in my scene this afternoon?

ANTON

I am afraid not, dear.

RUTH

*(Standing in the doorway)*

Anton.

ANTON

*(Surprised and glad to see her)*

Why, Ruth!

AGNES

*(As RUTH comes in)*

Oh, I'm so glad you've come to see Anton. I can't stay any longer and I just hated to think of him sitting here all alone.

ANTON

You were very sweet to come, both of you.

AGNES

I'm going to pray to God to arrange it so you can be in the Passion Play after all, Anton. And I think maybe *He'll* do it, because I haven't asked Him anything for a long time.

*(She runs out.)*

RUTH

Oh, Anton, but I wish it could be so.

ANTON

That doesn't matter now.

RUTH

What have you thought of me, Anton, not having come near you all this time.

ANTON

I am sure you had some good reason.

RUTH

Yes, I had. Simon has been ill.

ANTON

I am sorry.

RUTH

He took it very deeply to heart that you, his best friend, should have been accused and humiliated. He was to be in the chorus of the play, as you know; but he has given it up. He sent back his robe.

ANTON

(*Turns to her*)

His robe? I had forgotten *my* robe. It is still lying in there. (*Glances toward kitchen.*) The garment woven without a seam. Oh, well! it doesn't matter. No doubt whoever plays the rôle now would refuse to wear my robe; it has been soiled by my touch.

RUTH

Anton, please——

MOTHER

(*Enters from kitchen*)

Your breakfast is ready, Anton!

RUTH

(*Going to her*)

Aunt Mary!

MOTHER

Ruth!

RUTH

I'm so glad to see you!

MOTHER

My little girl! Oh, you don't know how it warms my heart to hold you here. Nothing hurt me so much as to think that you would join with the others in shunning us.

RUTH

I didn't know how they had all been treating you till I went to the village to-day to do some marketing. Then I came straight on here.

ANTON

Then Simon does not know that you have come?

RUTH

No.

MOTHER

Come in, Anton;—the coffee is all made.

ANTON

And how does our little valley flower like being a house-wife?

RUTH

It would be splendid if—if only Simon and I could know that you are happy.

ANTON

But we are happy. Can't you see we are? Why look at the mother I've got: the best mother and the best cook in the whole country. To be sure she's a wee bit daft——

*(As they go off into kitchen MARNIA appears on the landing carrying a small bundle tied in an old shawl. She shrinks back as she sees them and waits till they have gone off. Then she comes quickly down as NATHAN enters from outside.)*

MARNIA

I saw you from the window. I have been watching.

NATHAN

Well, I got it.

MARNIA

Be careful. Anton has returned.

NATHAN

He has?

MARNIA

I will close the door so that they shan't hear me. *(Shuts door of passage leading to kitchen.)* Simon Brock's wife is in there, too.

NATHAN

And Simon himself is here with the cart.

MARNA

Simon himself!

NATHAN

Yes. He is waiting down below the road-bend behind the trees.

MARNA

(To NATHAN)

But *he* will not go with us?

NATHAN

No, no; of course not. Are you ready?

MARNA

Yes.

NATHAN

(*Takes the bundle*)

Give me that and you carry the little fellow. If I took him he'd cry and you'd say it was the way I held him.

MARNA

I am not going to take the baby, Nathan.

NATHAN

Not going to take him?

MARNA

No. I have thought it all out. For his sake, it is better so. You see, I may have trouble getting work,

and if I should have to see him suffer, I couldn't bear it, Nathan.

NATHAN

But Marna, to leave your child——

MARNA

I know. It is hard, very hard, but you'll be kind to him, won't you? He's so good, hardly any trouble at all. He only has to be fed once in the night now; only be careful the milk is warmed. But there; what am I saying? Anton's mother knows well enough. I didn't think to wean him for many months; but he's strong, thank God, and soon enough he'll forget me.

NATHAN

And when you have work and are settled you'll send for me to bring him to you?

MARNA

*(Kneeling by cradle)*

No, I shan't, Nathan. I'm saying good-bye to him forever. It's better so, for he'll grow up with good people. And he won't have to see folk turn their heads away as his mother passes, and if they're kind perhaps he'll never know that I was a—a——

NATHAN

Marna! Don't say it! You know you're not that, whatever they say!

MARNA

*(Unheeding)*

Good-bye, my baby. This way you won't have to be ashamed. And your mother is going to try to live, if she can live, so that you wouldn't be ashamed even if you knew who she was and where—*(She bends forward and kisses the baby)* God bless you. The sight of you will be in my eyes forever.

*(She again drops forward over the cradle. As NATHAN touches her on the arm "to hurry" he looks up and sees SIMON who has entered. NATHAN gazes at SIMON and then at MARNA. SIMON sees her by the cradle. He goes to her slowly.)*

SIMON

*(Softly)*

Marna!

MARNA

*(She rises slowly, thinking it is NATHAN)*

I am ready——

SIMON

Marna. Let me see him—the boy.

MARNA

Why? He is nothing to you.

SIMON

Yes, he is. He must be. I must help you.

MARNA

I don't need your help nor does he.

(NATHAN *starts quietly towards the door.*)

SIMON

But it is right and it's the only way for me to find peace.

MARNA

You will never find peace while others suffer in your stead. (NATHAN *shakes his head sadly and goes out.*) Simon, I am going to go away and leave my boy forever.

SIMON

To leave him?

MARNA

Yes. Do you know why? Because I don't want him to have to be ashamed of his mother!

SIMON

Marna!

MARNA

(*Eyeing him steadfastly*)

But in all humbleness I pray God he may be spared the even greater shame of knowing who is his father.

SIMON

Have you no pity? Can't you see that I am in the dust at your feet?

MARNA

And where should you be? No. I will tell you. Not at *my* feet, but at *his*! At the feet of Anton Rendel!

SIMON

Marna. All you can say is nothing, compared to what I have already said to myself. But even now I daren't speak.

(RUTH enters from kitchen unobserved.)

Wait. I am going to make amends. I am leaving, too. I have planned to take my wife far away, and then I will write. I will tell them all the truth—everything; but not her. I can't tell *her*.

(*He looks up and seeing MARNA'S fixed gaze on RUTH; he turns and sees her standing there dumbfounded.*)

MARNA

(*Comprehending*)

I will leave you.

RUTH

No. Why should you, Marna? It is I who am the real intruder.

SIMON

Ruth!

RUTH

I see that at last. I must have been a fool not to see it before; a fool blinded by love.

MARNA

(*Gently*)

Then perhaps you can understand how *his* love could blind him, too.

RUTH

(*To MARNA*)

If it's love for me that made him forget decency, loyalty and truth I wish that I might never have had the power of waking such a love as his.

SIMON

(*Moves toward her*)

Ruth! My wife!

(*ANTON enters grasping the situation.*)

RUTH

Your *wife!* That is your wife standing there by the cradle of your child.

ANTON

Ruth, listen to me a moment.

RUTH

(*Piteously*)

Oh, Anton, I am so ashamed! So ashamed! It was for the sake of me, for the sake of my little fool's paradise, that you have suffered! That you stood silent while they stripped from you the trust and the honor and called you unworthy!

SIMON

*(Going toward her)*

Ruth!

RUTH

Don't speak to me. Don't touch me.

*(She rushes out. There is a distant murmur of the procession of villagers going to the Play.)*

SIMON

Ruth! Ruth! Don't leave me! Don't leave me!  
I love you, Ruth! I love you!

ANTON

*(His hand on SIMON'S shoulder)*

Don't, Simon, old friend, don't. I understand and so will she some day.

SIMON

Never—never—I've lost her—I've lost her.

NATHAN

Anton! Anton!

*(Enters hurriedly in great excitement. Closes the door, and holds it shut.)*

ANTON

Yes, Nathan?

NATHAN

You know that some people made threat to burn the house. They are coming, Anton. A great crowd of

them have turned up the road and—and one carries a great bundle of sticks under his arm.

(MARNA quickly takes the baby from the cradle.)

ANTON

Yes, for the scene of Isaac's sacrifice. They are on their way to the play.

NATHAN

No, no. You are wrong! Do you want to stay here till the rabble are upon us. (To MARNA) Quick, I have Simon's cart waiting!

MARNA

He's right, Anton. Where is your mother? Aunt Mary! Aunt Mary!

ANTON

Don't be frightened.

(The sound of many voices rises from outside.)

JAMES

(Off)

The Pastor has gone to the Play—Come on!

(The crowd, including MARTIN, JAMES, PAUL and RAYMOND enter hurriedly filling the doorway and one side of the room. They are all excited. The MOTHER enters in terror. NATHAN picks up a piece of wood to protect MARNA who stands holding her baby.)

ANTON

Put that down, Nathan!

*(There is a confusion of shouts and calls from outside. RUTH forces herself through the crowd.)*

RUTH

*(As she silences them.)*

Simon! I have brought these people here for you to tell them the truth!

OMNES

What is it? What does she say?

RUTH

Listen. Simon has something to say to you. Listen!

ANTON

Ruth!

SIMON

*(To ANTON)*

No no; it is right. I stood by and let you be shamed publicly, and now—*(He faces the crowd.)* My wife has asked you to come here so that I should right a terrible wrong that you have done through me to a good and noble man. *(The crowd are bewildered.)* And there is a girl and a little child. She, too, does not deserve your blame, not one tenth as much as the man who seduced her.

MARTIN

That is true enough!

SIMON

I am the man.

*(There is a moment's stunned silence, then a sudden babble of voices. RUTH turns to NATHAN who takes her in his arms. MARNA goes to the cradle; puts baby in it.)*

MARTIN

And you stood by while we tried to drive Anton from the village?

OMNES

*(Starting toward SIMON)*

Shame, shame!

ANTON

Wait, my friends! Justice is with God and since He gives mercy, we poor offenders may well be merciful.

OMNES

The Pastor! The Pastor is coming.

*(PASTOR SAUNDERS enters through the crowd.)*

MARTIN

I'm glad you're here, Pastor. Simon Brock has just make a confession to us all.

PASTOR

A confession?

MARTIN

He is the father of the little one in that cradle.

PASTOR  
(*Slowly*)

This is true, Simon?

SIMON

Yes.

PASTOR  
Anton, what can I say to you?

ANTON  
(*Puts his hand on SIMON's shoulder*)

Say that you are glad to learn that a man has found himself a man.

PASTOR  
I wish that there was some way for us to make amends to you.

OMNES  
Yes, yes.

ANTON  
There is one gift I should like to ask.

OMNES  
Yes; yes. Anything.

ANTON  
Then won't you ask them, Pastor, to let Marna stay on here in the village.

PASTOR

*(Turns to the villagers)*

You hear what Anton says?

MARNA

No; thank you, Anton, it is better that I go away. You see, some day my little boy will grow up to understand these things.

MARTIN

Marna, your child shall grow up with our children, and never by word or look will he come to know from us of anything of all this but what you tell him.

*(Murmurs of assent from the crowd.)*

MARNA

*(Half audibly, with bowed head)*

Thank you . . .

*(The chant begins outside.)*

JAMES

*(Looking off)*

It's the procession!

OMNES

The procession!

PASTOR

Yes, my children. Go and join them, you must not be late.

OMNES

*(As they start off)*

Good-bye, Anton. God bless you.

ANTON

God bless you.

PASTOR

Anton Rendel. I think you are a better Christian than any of us here.

JAMES

*(At door)*

Pastor, may we speak to you a moment?

PASTOR

*(Going to them)*

Surely my son.

ANTON

*(Turns to her)*

Ruth——

RUTH

Yes, Anton.

PASTOR

Anton, young Mayre is outside; he wants you to take back the rôle of the Christus.

ANTON

No, no.

*(MOTHER goes to him with an appealing hand on his shoulder.)*

PASTOR

Everyone wishes it so, and for the sake of the village and our play, I ask it.

ANTON

Very well then. I will.

PASTOR

Thank you, Anton.

OMNES

*(Going off happily)*

He agrees. He takes it back.

MARTIN

*(As they are going)*

We will wait outside while he robes himself.

MOTHER

Yes, yes. I'll get the robe for you, Anton.

*(She goes into kitchen.)*

PASTOR

*(In doorway turns to them)*

God bless this house, and all who dwell therein.

MARTIN, JAMES, PAUL

Amen—amen!

NATHAN

*(Cynically)*

Amen!

*(The PASTOR and the others all go off as the MOTHER enters, reverently carrying the robe which she lays on ANTON'S arm.)*

MOTHER

Every day I have taken it out and cried over it, and now after all I am to see you wear it. God is good!

(ANTON kisses her. She lifts the robe off ANTON'S arms and goes up the stairs, carrying the robe folded over her arms.)

NATHAN

(Shaking ANTON'S hand)

Men that love truth and kindness and mercy may call their faith by different names, Anton; but the things that separate them must look very small, to the God that puts goodness into the hearts of both Jew and Gentile.

(He goes out.)

ANTON

Ruth, can't you forgive him?

RUTH

I can't forgive him for having stood back and let an innocent man suffer in his stead.

ANTON

This day we are going to commemorate the sufferings of one who was wholly innocent and who suffered for a world of us guilty ones.

RUTH

Anton; please leave us alone.

(SIMON rises from chair below mantel where he has been sitting.)

ANTON

As you wish, dear.

*(He goes up the stairs and off. MARNA takes up her baby and goes toward the kitchen doorway.)*

RUTH

Marna. (MARNA turns.) Wait, I am going down to my home in the valley. (SIMON raises his head.) But I want you to know if you should ever need a woman friend, I will be always ready. And sometimes you must let your little boy come and see me.

MARNA  
(Dreamily)

You feel it, too.

RUTH

What do you mean?

MARNA

There is a spirit in this house, something that broods upon the souls of each who enters it, and raises them up to the heights.

RUTH

Why, yes, I wonder.

MARNA

Do you believe that the spirit of Christ left the earth when He left it? Or may it perhaps come back to show us the way again?

RUTH

To show us again the gospel of kindness and forgiveness?

MARNA

And understanding . . . that was His greatest secret, Ruth; understanding.

*(She goes out, after a second's pause, to the kitchen. RUTH turns to SIMON.)*

RUTH

Simon, I want that understanding to come to me; perhaps it will some day.

SIMON

Some day? You are going back to your home?

RUTH

Yes. It will be easier that way for a little while.

SIMON

*(Dully)*

Will it?

RUTH

And there's work for you to do there, down in the valley. And later, we will come back to the heights.

SIMON

*(Wonderingly)*

You want me to go with you?

RUTH

You are my husband, Simon. And down there we will try to find that understanding together.

SIMON

*(Seizing her hand and kissing it humbly)*

Ruth!

*(BROOKE, the poet appears in the doorway.)*

BROOKE

May I come in? I was on my way down to the play and I thought I'd stop for a moment to see what Anton has been making.

RUTH

Oh, the carvings.

BROOKE

Yes. Aren't you the little bride who was here that day I came with my two friends?

RUTH

Yes.

BROOKE

I wished you happiness then. *(Shaking hands.)*  
May I wish it again?

RUTH

Thank you.

BROOKE

*(Turns to the carving on the table)*

A mother and child. *(To RUTH)* Is it a Madonna?

RUTH

Does Madonna mean mother?

BROOKE

*(Examining it)*

Mother-love, that's what it should be called. The only absolutely unselfish love in the world.

*(ANTON slowly comes down the steps, clothed in the white vestments of Christ. They stand watching him, awed and silent. He comes to RUTH and puts his hand on her arm, looking at her in question.)*

ANTON

Well, Ruth?

RUTH

It is just as you would wish with us, I think.

*(Then ANTON slowly goes to SIMON placing his hand on his shoulders.)*

ANTON

I am glad.

*(He turns and seeing BROOKE smiles in recognition. Outside there is a distant boom of the cannons. He slowly crosses to the door as they gaze at him. The trumpets are heard. ANTON*



ANTON: "I'm glad."

*Act 3.*



*opens the door as the choir sings. The warm sunlight floods over his head. He walks slowly out. The others continue to gaze after him.)*

BROOKE

There is something that grips you even against your will; something that lives, that goes on living.

*(The choir is heard as ANTON joins them.)*

*Curtain.*





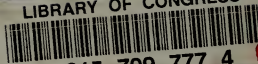








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